





HISTORY

OF THE

BRITISH CORN-LAWS.

BY J. C. PLATT.

FROM THE FIRST LONDON EDITION,

WITH ADDITIONS BY THE AMERICAN EDITOR.

---

NEW YORK:  
HUNT'S MERCHANTS' MAGAZINE,  
142 FULTON-STREET.  
1845.

Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2007 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation

# CONTENTS.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTION.

Importance of the subject—The population of Great Britain—Progress of agricultural industry and manufactures—Manufacturing counties—Agricultural sections—Increase of immigration—Waste lands of England—Divisions of the subject—Periods of the importation and exportation of corn in England, &c. . . . . 127

## CHAPTER II.

### FIRST PERIOD.—FROM EARLY TIMES TO 1688.

Early municipal regulations and enactments—Early discouragements to importations—Progress of agriculture in 1436, and surplus of grain—Prices at which it was then allowed to be exported—Complaints against its restrictions—Subsequent legal enactments for the protection of the corn-grower—High prices of wheat in England—Preamble of the first corn-law—Restrictive statute of 1463—Subsequent complaints resulting therefrom—Allusions to this in Pastor's letters—Motives of the state policy, &c.—Subsequent acts of 1533, and regulation of prices—Opposition to the laws on this point—Enactments respecting farms, &c.—Singular regulations respecting the supply of articles of food, &c.—Difficulties consequent on these—The system partially inoperative—Freedom of export allowed in 1554—Extension of privileges—Averages of exportation settled annually—Prices at which importations were allowed—Effects of this regulation—After enactments, and their effects—The law of 1663, and its influence—Further legislation on the subject in 1670—New limitation of rates of exportation—Failure of its object—Allusions to this by Roger Coke—Defective harvests of 1673, 74, and 75—Depressed condition of agriculturists—The acts of 1570 and 1670 compared. . . . . 130

## CHAPTER III.

## SECOND PERIOD.—FROM 1689 TO 1773.

High prices of the seven years ending 1679—Their effects, &c.—Bounties on exportation of corn—Preamble of the act authorizing this—Term of its suspension—New act of 1700, abolishing all existing duties on exportation of corn, &c.—Excess of exports from 1697 to 1773—Further statistics—References to Smith, Hallam, and Malthus, on this subject—The cycle of good seasons from 1730 to 1755—Prices of the quartern loaf in London in 1766—Importation allowed in 1773—Excess of exports from 1742 to 1751—Suspensions of bounty on exportation—Dissatisfaction of the agriculturists—Increase of population after the peace—New mode of ascertaining the average prices of corn, &c.—The movements of 1732—Weekly returns of prices established in 1770—The important act of 1772, &c. . . . . 142

## CHAPTER IV.

## THIRD PERIOD.—FROM 1773 TO 1791.

The corn act of 1773—Its influence on tillage, navigation, &c.—Number of acres then under cultivation—The landed interests dependent upon foreign supplies—Dissatisfaction consequent on this—Average prices of corn at this period—Regulations of the London Corn Exchange—New regulations of 1788–89, respecting the maritime districts, &c. . . . . 149

## CHAPTER V.

## FOURTH PERIOD.—FROM 1791 TO 1804.

New scale of importation duties of 1791—Excess of importation, during the thirteen subsequent years, in England—Sacrifices induced by this—Scarcity of grain, and its consequences—Seizure of neutral vessels laden with corn—Parliamentary measures for economizing the consumption of wheat—The hair-powder tax imposed—Severe distress of the times—High prices—Increased scarcity—Further measures by the British House of Commons—Lord Hawkesbury's bill in 1800—New public projects to relieve the public distress—Increased high prices—The alloyance system—Riots, and great distress of the lower classes—Agricultural wages at this period—Comparative estimates of wages and provisions—Adam Smith's remarks on this subject—Remarks of Mr. Milne—Prosperity of the landlords at this time of dearth—Injurious results to trade of the act of Charles II., &c. . . . . 153

## CHAPTER VI.

## FIFTH PERIOD.—FROM 1804 TO 1815.

Amendments to the act of 1791, in 1804—Report of the committee—New importation rules—Increased value of wheat—Its consequences—Injurious effects of the war—Prohibitory enactments and decrees with respect to America, Berlin, &c.—Supplies from France and the Netherlands—High prices of the home markets—Increased taxation—Strike of the working-classes in 1812—Renewed riots—Subsequent reduction in prices—Reconsideration of the corn laws—Act permitting free interchange of corn between Ireland and England in 1806 . . . . . 161

## CHAPTER VII.

## SIXTH PERIOD.—FROM 1815 TO 1822.

The new importation act of 1815—Average prices of the previous year—Popular commotion—Appeal to military force—Protest of the minority against the passage of the bill—Restrictive character of the act—Regulation of prices, and their fluctuating character—Fresh proposals in Parliament—Huskisson's resolutions, &c.—New project of the Committee in 1821—Plans for the alleviation of the agricultural distress in 1822—Advance of wages—Proposition for an exchequer loan of £100,000, by Lord Londonderry . . . . . 167

## CHAPTER VIII.

## SEVENTH PERIOD.—FROM 1822 TO 1828.

Defects of the law of 1815—Extraordinary disparity of prices from 1804 to 1815—Amendments to the foregoing act—Their intentions, and the failure of them—The importation act of 1826—The act of indemnity for this order—Canning's measures in 1827 for graduated scale of duties—Modifications by the Duke of Wellington—Improvements in the corn trade in North American colonies—Novel scale of importation charges—Inefficiency of the fluctuating scale, &c. . . . . 177

## CHAPTER IX.

## EIGHTH PERIOD.—FROM 1828 TO THE PRESENT TIME.

Lord Glenelg's bill in 1828—Still in force—Its character and provisions—Average scale of prices, contrasted with that of Canning—Its inefficiency

in preventing fluctuating prices—The distress of 1833 and 1836—Condition of landlords and tenants—Theory of Gregory King—Prices in 1835 and '39—Estimated consumption of corn in Great Britain, its cost, &c.—Causes of stagnation of trade, &c. . . . . 181

## CHAPTER X.

### NINTH PERIOD.—MAY, 1841.

Lord John Russell's proposal for permanently fixed duties on imported corn, &c.—Review of the several measures of the British legislature on the subject—Productive industry and capabilities of England—The plan of the proposed alterations—Commercial relations at the peace, and the results of the erroneous policy—Representations of the Committee for Munich, Dresden, &c.—Comparative exports of cotton-stuffs to the north in 1820 and 1823—Considerations on the proposed scale of duties—Probable results—Memorandum from the department of the customs in England—Erroneous estimates of the cost of foreign corn—Extract from McCulloch on this point—Prices of the Prussian and English markets contrasted—Extract from Mr. Jacob's report on transportation of wheat to Odessa, Dantzic, &c.—Account of the consumption of wheat and flour, foreign and colonial, in the United Kingdom—Evidences of the prejudicial influence of the fluctuating scale of prices, &c. . . . . 186



# HISTORY

## OF THE

# BRITISH CORN-LAWS.

---

### CHAPTER I.

#### INTRODUCTION.

Importance of the subject—The population of Great Britain—Progress of agricultural industry and manufactures—Manufacturing counties—Agricultural sections—Increase of immigration—Waste lands of England—Divisions of the subject—Periods of the importation and exportation of corn in England, &c.

OF all the great economical questions of the present day, there is none so important as that which concerns an abundant supply of corn. The population of Great Britain is now twice as great as it was fifty years ago, and may be estimated at 19,000,000, while it is increasing at the rate of about 285,000 every year. At the same time, there never before existed a state of society in which so large a proportion of the population obtained a share of the produce of the soil by the exercise of non-agricultural industry; only about one third of the total population being directly engaged in agriculture. The gigantic progress of manufactures is indicated by the rapid increase of the population in those counties in which they are chiefly established. From 1700 to 1831 the population of Lancashire increased 800 per cent.; Warwickshire 251 per cent.; Staffordshire 250; Nottinghamshire 246; Cheshire 212 per cent.; and in other coun-

ties the increase varied from 119 to 136 per cent. The total population of ten manufacturing counties was 2,529,000 in 1800, and 4,406,000 in 1831. The principal agricultural counties only increased 84 per cent. in the period from 1700 to 1831. There is a constant stream of immigration into the large towns and manufacturing districts from the adjacent agricultural counties. From 1821 to 1831 the immigration into Lancashire proceeded at the rate of 17,000 a year. In 1837 above 2000 persons were removed to the places of manufacturing industry from Suffolk, at the expense of their respective parishes. Of this number, 1675 were paupers, who had received a sum of £1953, in the twelve months prior to their removal. On the one hand, in the rural districts, we have a population fully equal to the existing demand for its labor, and requiring outlets for the increase of its numbers; and on the other, in the manufacturing districts, there is a population whose consumption confers a much higher value upon agricultural produce, and where, by extending the field of employment, room is made both for the expansion of the agricultural and non-agricultural population.

The improvements in agriculture within the present century have greatly increased the supply of food, but the experience of many years has shown that our population is now, to a great extent, dependent upon the corn-growers of other countries; and that, when the crops in Great Britain are below an average, and even when they are not abundant, the rise of prices creates severe distress among large masses of the population, unless the supply of corn and grain is increased by importation. This distress could not be avoided, if all the waste lands of England capable of improvement were taken into cultivation. In an old country, where all the best, and even the moderately fertile soils have long been cultivated, the resort to those of inferior powers of production, so far from alleviating the distress of the population,

will hasten its poverty and degradation. This, therefore, is not one of the resources to which any country must look as a means of obtaining a permanent supply of food.

In the following sketch, we shall pass in review the various regulations under which the trade in corn and grain has been placed at different periods. We shall begin with those historical details which are necessary to be known in order that we may understand what the corn-laws are—what they are as at present established, and out of what previous circumstances and enactments those now in force have grown.

The subject divides itself into two periods:—1st, When England exported a considerable quantity of grain annually; and, 2d, When she ceased to be an exporting, and became solely an importing country. In these two periods there occur epochs of a sufficiently distinct character to allow of the subject being treated in smaller divisions, to each of which belongs some peculiarity that distinguishes and separates it from the rest.

## CHAPTER II.

## FIRST PERIOD.—FROM EARLY TIMES TO 1688.

Early municipal regulations and enactments—Early discouragements to importations—Progress of agriculture in 1436, and surplus of grain—Prices at which it was then allowed to be exported—Complaints against its restrictions—Subsequent legal enactments for the protection of the corn-grower—High prices of wheat in England—Preamble of the first corn-law—Restrictive statute of 1463—Subsequent complaints resulting therefrom—Allusions to this in Pastor's letters—Motives of the state policy, &c.—Subsequent acts of 1533, and regulation of prices—Opposition to the laws on this point—Enactments respecting farms, &c.—Singular regulations respecting the supply of articles of food, &c.—Difficulties consequent on these—The system partially inoperative—Freedom of export allowed in 1554—Extension of privileges—Averages of exportation settled annually—Prices at which importations were allowed—Effects of this regulation—After enactments, and their effects—The law of 1663, and its influence—Further legislation on the subject in 1670—New limitation of rates of exportation—Failure of its object—Allusions to this by Roger Coke—Defective harvests of 1673, '74, and '75—Depressed condition of agriculturists—The acts of 1570 and 1670 compared.

LITTLE practical advantage would arise from bestowing much space on the former part of this period. In a statute of the thirteenth century we find the average prices of wheat and other grain had become an object of attention. The following directions are given to the municipal authorities of towns, in the statute entitled *Judicium Pillorie*, supposed to be of the date of 51 Henry III. (1266–7):—"First, they shall inquire the price of wheat; that is, to wit, how a quarter of the best wheat was sold the last market-day, and how the second wheat, and how the third; and how a quarter of barley and oats." In 1360 the exportation of corn was prohibited by statute.\* In 1393 corn might be exported by the king's subjects "to what parts that please them," except to

\* 34 Edw. III. c. 20.

the king's enemies. "Nevertheless," it is added, "the king wills that his council may restrain the said passage when they shall think best for the profit of the realm."\* This act was confirmed in 1425.†

Thus it appears that in those early times sufficient grain was raised in England to admit of exportation. It was, however, the policy of that age to endeavor, as much as possible, to retain within the kingdom all those things which were indispensable to its wants, rather than by permitting freedom of export and import to trust to the operation of the commercial principle for an adequate supply. The excess of grain must have been very considerable to have allowed any deviation from the ordinary practice of restriction. In the fourteenth century, it seems to have been no unusual practice for the different countries of Europe to export corn;‡ and it must have been exported from England previous to the statute of 1360, as that act was intended to put a stop to it. Thirty-three years afterward, as already stated, the export of corn was expressly encouraged.

In 1436, there is another statute indicative of the progress of agriculture, and of the existence of a surplus supply of corn in this country; the exportation of wheat being allowed without the king's license, when the price per quarter at the place of shipment was 6*s.* 8*d.* In the preamble of the statute the restrictions on exportation are loudly complained of:—"for cause whereof, farmers and other men, which use manurement of their land, may not sell their corn but of a bare price, to the great damage of all the realm;" and the remedy provided is a freer permission to export the surplus—a regulation which is intended for the profit of the whole realm, but "especially for the counties adjoining to the sea."§

\* 17 Ric. II. c. 7.

† 4 Hen. VI. c. 5.

‡ Account of the Spasmodic Cholera of the Fourteenth Century: App. to Rickman's Summary of Population Returns of 1831, 8vo. edit.

§ 15 Hen. VI. c. 2.

In 1441, this statute was continued,\* and in 1444-5, it was rendered perpetual.†

Nearly thirty years after the statute of 1436, occurs the first symptom of a corn-law, for the protection of the home-grower from the effects of a supply of foreign grain. From this we may conclude that the balance of prices had turned; and that, at least for a time, prices were higher in England than in the neighboring countries. This might be the result of abundant seasons on the continent; but, at all events, the importation from other countries gave rise to complaints, which were followed by a statute passed in 1463, in the preamble of which it is remarked that, "Whereas the laborers and occupiers of husbandry within this realm be daily grievously endamaged by bringing of corn out of other lands and parts into this realm, when corn of the growing of this realm is at a low price;"‡ in remedy of which it was enacted that wheat should not be imported, unless the price at the place of import exceeded 6*s.* 8*d.* per quarter. Up to this time, there is no reason to believe that the importation of corn from abroad had been either prohibited or subjected to restriction. Such a prohibition would have been opposed to the spirit of our old commercial policy, which was anxiously directed to the object of attracting to the country, and preserving within it, as much food as possible. The agricultural interest had already succeeded in carrying one modification of the old principle, by which they obtained the liberty of sending corn abroad, and their ascendancy was still further indicated by the restriction on the importation of corn imposed by the statute of 1463. So long as the price of wheat was below 6*s.* 8*d.* per quarter, exportation was free, and importation was prohibited. The price, therefore, was intended to be sustained at that height, so far as it was possible so to sustain it by legislative contrivance; and the benefit of the corn-grower

\* 20 Hen. VI. c. 6.

† 23 Hen. VI. c. 5.

‡ 3 Edw. IV. c. 2.

was the sole object of the statute. In 1474, (eleven years after the statute 3 Edw. IV. c. 2, was passed,) we have the authority of the Paston Letters in proof of the suffering experienced from the want of a market for the superabundant supply of grain. Margaret Paston, writing to her son on the 29th of Jan. 1474, after quoting the very low price of corn and grain, says—"There is none outload suffered to go out of this country as yet; the king hath commanded that there should none go out of this land. I fear me we shall have right a strange world: God amend it when his will is."\* In a letter written in the following year, she makes the same complaints about low prices and the scarcity of money.† The gentry and farmers of this period were in much the same condition in regard to money matters as the land owners of Poland and other parts of northern and eastern Europe at the present time, after abundant harvests, with the ports of the best markets temporarily or permanently closed against the admission of their surplus produce. The protective statute of 1463 had possibly stimulated tillage beyond the demand of the home market, and the abundance of the harvest in other countries caused the ports to be closed against them, or, as in the instance alluded to by Margaret Paston, exportation was prohibited from some motives of state policy.

In 1533-4, an end was put to the system of free exportation which had been established in 1463, and, with some few occasional exceptions, had continued from that time; and thenceforth it was forbidden to export corn and provisions without the king's license. The statute enacted for this purpose‡ was intended to keep down prices, though the preamble sets out with the rational observation that, "forasmuch as dearth, scarcity, good cheap, [good market,] and plenty, [of victual,] happeneth, riseth, and chanceth, of so many and

\* Paston Letters, vol. ii. p. 91. Edit. by A. Ramsay. † Ibid p. 93.

‡ 25 Hen. VIII. c. 2.

divers reasons, that it is very hard and difficult to put any certain prices to any such things." It however ended by enacting that, on complaint being made of high prices, they shall be regulated by the lords of the council, and made known by proclamation ; and that farmers and others shall sell their commodities at the prices thus fixed.

During the greater part of the 16th century, a struggle was maintained by the makers of the laws against the rise of prices, which characterized nearly the whole of that period. The discouragement of tillage, and the increase of sheep-pastures were supposed to be the main causes of this rise. In 1533, a statute was passed which enacted that no man should keep more than two thousand sheep, except on his own land, and that no tenant should rent more than two farms.\* The statute entitled "An Act for the Maintenance and Increase of Tillage and Corn," attempted to force cultivation, by enacting that for the future at least as much land should be tilled in every parish, as had been under the plough at any time since the accession of Henry VIII., under a penalty, to be exacted from the parish, of 5s. for every acre that should be deficient.

This remarkable period in the history of agriculture, and in the social condition of the people, was marked by other singular regulations respecting the supply of the necessities of life, and their price. In September, 1549, a proclamation was issued, directed against dealers in the principal articles of food. According to it, no man was to buy and sell the self-same thing again, except brokers, and they were not to have more than ten quarters of grain in their possession at one time. This proclamation directed "that all justices should divide themselves into the hundreds, and look what superfluous corn was in every barn, and appoint it to be sold at a reasonable price ; also, that one must be in every market-

\* 25 Hen. VIII. c. 13.



town, to see the corn bought. Whoso brought no corn to market, as he was appointed, was to forfeit £10, unless the purveyors took it up, or it was sold to the neighbors.”\* Obedience to these regulations was not confined to the temporary provisions of a proclamation ; but in 1551–2, they were, with some modifications, embodied in a statute.† By this enactment, engrossers (persons buying corn to sell again) were subjected to heavy penalties. For the third offence they were to be set in the pillory, to forfeit their personal effects, and to be imprisoned during the king’s pleasure. Farmers buying corn for seed were compelled to sell at the same time an equal quantity of their corn in store, under penalty of forfeiting double the value of what they had bought. Persons might engross corn, not forestalling it—that is, enhancing the price or preventing the supply—when wheat was under 6s. 8d. per quarter.

In 1562–3 a further attempt was made to restrict the operations of buying and selling in articles of food, as well as many other commodities. The 5 and 6 Edw. VI. c. 14, already quoted, contained a proviso that corn-badgers, allowed to that office by three justices of the peace of the county where the said badger dwelt, could buy provisions in open fair or market for towns and cities, and sell them, without being guilty of the offence of forestalling ; but this relaxation of the statute was corrected by another statute passed in 1562–3,‡ in the preamble of which the former enactment is thus alluded to :—“ Since the making of which act, such a great number of persons, seeking only to live easily, and to leave their honest labor, have, and do daily seek to be allowed to the said office, being most unfit and unmeet for those purposes, and also very hurtful to the commonwealth of this realm, as well as by enhancing the price of corn and grain,

\* King Edw. VI.’s Journal ; Sharon Turner’s Hist. Eng. vol. i. p. 172.

† 5 and 6 Edw. VI. c. 14.

‡ 5 Eliz. c. 12.

as also by the diminishing of good and necessary husbandmen." It was then enacted that the licenses to corn-badgers should only be granted once a-year by the justices at quarter-sessions, instead of at any period by three justices ; and that none were to obtain a license but resident householders of three years' standing, who are or have been married, and of the age of thirty, and are not servants or retainers to another person. Those who received a license were to have it renewed at the end of every year. Licensed persons were also required to find security not to forestall or engross in their dealings, and not to buy out of open fair or market, except under express license. The statute did not apply to the counties of Westmoreland, Cumberland, Lancaster, Chester, and York.

It was scarcely possible for the legislature to do more towards the discouragement of a most useful class of men, whose operations are of such service to society in general, and to the poor in particular. But enactments of this description were loudly demanded by the people, who could scarcely get bread sometimes, in consequence of the high price of provisions, which they attributed to the intervention of the corn-dealer between the producer and consumer.

The system introduced in 1534, under which exportation was interdicted, lasted about twenty years, and even during that period, was most probably in a great degree inoperative.

In 1554 a new act was passed,\* which restored the freedom of export so long as the price of wheat should not exceed 6s. 8d., that of rye 4s., and that of barley 3s. per quarter. The preamble complains that former acts against the exportation of grain and provisions had been evaded, by reason whereof they had grown unto a "wonderful dearth and extreme prices." Under the present act, when prices exceeded 6s. 8d. per quarter for wheat, exportation was to cease ; and when it was

\*1 and 2 Phil. and Mary, c. 5.

under that price it could not be exported to any foreign country, or to Scotland, without a license, under penalty of forfeiting double the value of the cargo, as well as the vessel, besides imprisonment of the master and mariners of the vessel for one year. The penalty for exporting a greater quantity than was warranted by the license was treble the value of the cargo, and imprisonment; and a cargo could be taken only to the port mentioned in the license. The object of the act was in effect to prevent exportation when there was not a sufficient supply in the home market, and to permit it to be sent abroad so long as it was below a certain price at home.

In 1562, only eight years after the above act had been passed, the liberty of exportation was extended, and wheat might be carried out of the country when the average price was 10s. per quarter, that of rye, peas, and beans 8s., and that of barley or malt 6s. 8d. per quarter.\* The better to prevent evasion of the law, it was at the same time enacted that the commodity should only be exported from such ports as her Majesty might by proclamation appoint.

In 1571 a statute was passed† which contains provisions for settling once a-year the average prices by which exportation should be governed. The Lord President and Council in the North, also the Lord President and Council in Wales, and the Justices of Assize, within their respective jurisdictions, “yearly shall, upon conference had with the inhabitants of the country, of the cheapness and dearth of any kinds of grain,” determine “whether it shall be meet at any time to permit any grain to be carried out of any port within the said several jurisdictions or limits; and so shall, in writing, under their hands and seal, cause and make a determination either for permission or prohibition, and the same cause to be, by the sheriff of the counties, published and affixed in as many accustomed market-towns and ports within the said shire as

\* 5 Eliz. c. 5.

† 13 Eliz. c. 13.

they shall think convenient." The averages, when once struck, were to continue in force until the same authorities ordered otherwise; and if their regulations should "be hurtful to the country by means of dearth, or be a great hindrance to tillage by means of too much cheapness," they could make the necessary alterations. All proceedings under this act were to be notified to the queen or privy council. The statute enacted that, "for the better increase of tillage, and for maintenance and increase of the navy and mariners of this realm," corn might be exported at all times to friendly countries, when proclamation was not made to the contrary. A poundage or customs duty of 1*s.* per quarter was charged on all wheat exported; but if exported under a special license, and not under the act, the customs duty was 2*s.* per quarter.

The law of 1463, which prohibited importation so long as the price of wheat was under 6*s.* 8*d.*, that of rye under 4*s.*, and that of barley under 3*s.* the quarter, appears not to have been repealed, but it must have remained inoperative, from the prices seldom or probably never descending below these rates. The importation of corn, therefore, we may reckon to have been practically free at this time, so far as the law could render it so.

In 1592-3 the price at which exportation was permitted was raised to 20*s.* per quarter, and the customs duty was fixed at 2*s.*\* In 1603-4 the importation price was raised to 26*s.* 8*d.* per quarter;† and, in 1623, to 32*s.*‡—having risen, in the course of sixty-five years, from 6*s.* 8*d.* By the 21 Jac. I. c. 28, unless wheat was under 32*s.* per quarter, and other grain in proportion, buying corn and selling it again was not permitted. The king could restrain the liberty of exportation by proclamation. In 1627-8 another statute§ relative to the corn-trade was passed, which, however, made

\* 35 Eliz. c. 7.

† 21 Jac. c. 28.

‡ 1 Jac. I. c. 25.

§ 3 Car. I. c. 5.

no alteration in the previous statute of James I. In 1660 a new scale of duties was introduced. When the price of wheat per quarter was under 44*s.* the export duty was 5*s.* 6*d.*; and when the price was above 44*s.*, the duty rose to 6*s.* 8*d.* Exportation was permitted free whenever the price of wheat did not exceed 40*s.* per quarter.\*

In 1663 the corn-trade again became the subject of legislation, and an act was passed† which favored the corn-grower, or at any rate that portion of the community connected with and dependent upon agriculture, to a greater extent than any previous statute. The preamble of this act commenced by asserting that “the surest and effectualest means of promoting and advancing any trade, occupation, or mystery, being by rendering it profitable to the users thereof,” and that, large quantities of land being waste, which might be profitably cultivated if sufficient encouragement were given for the cost and labor on the same, it should be enacted, with a view of encouraging the application of capital and labor to waste lands, that, after September, 1663, when wheat did not exceed 48*s.* per quarter at the places and havens of shipment, the export duty should be only 5*s.* 4*d.* per quarter. The demand of the home market was not sufficient to take off the surplus produce of the corn-growers, and the reduction of the duty was intended to encourage exportation. By the same act when wheat did not exceed 48*s.* per quarter, “then it shall be lawful for all and every person (not forestalling nor selling the same in the open market within three months after the buying thereof) to buy in open market, and to keep in his or their granaries or houses, and to sell again, such corn and grain,” any statute to the contrary notwithstanding. The latter part of this statute may be regarded as indicating a juster view than others passed since the 5 and 6 Edw. VI. c. 14.

\* 12 Car. II. c. 4.

† 15 Car. II. c. 7.

In 1670 a further important change was made in the same direction, exportation being permitted as long as wheat should be under 53s. 4d. the quarter, the customs duty being only 1s. per quarter. Corn imported from foreign countries was at the same time loaded with duties so heavy as effectually to exclude it, being 16s. when the price in this country was at or under 53s. 4d. per quarter, and 8s. when above that price and under 80s., at which latter price importation became free.\* The object of this act was to relieve the agricultural interests from the depression under which they were laboring from the low prices of produce which had existed for twenty years, more particularly from 1646 to 1665, and also more or less during the greater part of the century. Between 1617 and 1621 wheat fell from 43s. 3d. the quarter to 27s., in consequence of which farmers were unable to pay their rents. The low price was occasioned by abundant harvests; "for remedy whereof the Council have written letters into every shire, and some say to every market-town, to provide a granary or storehouse, with a stock to buy corn, and keep it for a dear year."† The cheapness of wheat was attended with the good effect of raising the standard of diet amongst the poorer classes, who are described as "traversing the markets to find out the finest wheats, for none else would now serve their use, though before they were glad of the coarser rye-bread."‡ The act of 1670 does not appear to have answered its object. Roger Coke, writing in 1671, says—"The ends designed by the acts against the importation of Irish cattle, of raising the rents of the lands of England, are so far from being attained that the contrary hath ensued;"§ and he speaks of a great diminution of cultivation.

The harvests of 1673-4-5 proved defective, and the same result occurred in 1677-8, so that the average price of the

\* 22 Car. II. c. 13.  
in his 'Hist. of Prices.'

† Contemporary writers quoted by Mr. Tooke  
‡ Ibid.

§ Ibid.

seven years ending 1672, during which wheat ranged at 36*s.* the quarter, was followed in the seven subsequent years, ending 1679, by an average of 46*s.*, being a rise of nearly 30 per cent. Under this encouragement there was a considerable extension of tillage, and the years of scarcity being followed by twelve abundant seasons in succession, (with the exception of 1684, which was somewhat deficient,) the price of corn and grain again sunk very low. In the six years ending 1691 the average price of wheat was 29*s.* 5*d.* the quarter, and if the four years ending 1691 be taken, the average price was only 27*s.* 7*d.*, being lower than at any period during the whole of the century. There was no competition in the English market with the foreign grower during the above-mentioned years of low prices; exportation was freely permitted on payment of a nominal duty; but scarcely ever had the agriculturists been in so depressed a state. The means which they took to relieve themselves will be noticed in the next period.

Before closing this section we may notice the alteration which took place in 1670 in the mode of striking the average prices of corn and grain. The old system established in 1570 (13 Eliz. c. 13) was acted upon until 1685, the Corn Act of 1670 having neglected the necessary directions for an alteration. These were made by a statute which enacted that justices of the peace, in counties wherein foreign corn might be imported, may, at quarter-sessions, by the oaths of two persons duly qualified, that is, possessed of freehold estates of the annual value of 20*l.*, or leasehold estates of 50*l.*, and not being corn-dealers, and by such other means as they shall see fit, determine the market price of middling English corn, which is to be certified on oath, hung up in some public place, and sent to the chief officer at the custom-house in each district.

## CHAPTER III.

## SECOND PERIOD.—FROM 1689 TO 1773.

High prices of the seven years ending 1679—Their effects, &c.—Bounties on exportation of corn—Preamble of the act authorizing this—Term of its suspension—New act of 1700, abolishing all existing duties on exportation of corn, &c.—Excess of exports from 1697 to 1773—Further statistics—References to Smith, Hallam, and Malthus, on this subject—The cycle of good seasons from 1730 to 1755—Prices of the quartern loaf in London in 1766—Importation allowed in 1773—Excess of exports from 1742 to 1751—Suspensions of bounty on exportation—Dissatisfaction of the agriculturists—Increase of population after the peace—New mode of ascertaining the average prices of corn, &c.—The movements of 1732—Weekly returns of prices established in 1770—The important act of 1772, &c.

IN 1689, immediately after the Revolution, the landowners succeeded in carrying a very important measure. The high prices of the seven years ending 1679 had doubtless encouraged tillage, and a succession of favorable seasons had under these circumstances led to a great depreciation in the value of agricultural produce. Exportation of corn therefore was not only to be permitted as heretofore, but actually encouraged by bounties. The statute for granting bounties is entitled "An Act for Encouraging the Exportation of Corn."\* The preamble stated that it had been "found by experience that the exportation of corn and grain into foreign countries, when the price thereof is at a low rate in this kingdom, hath been a great advantage, not only to the owners of land, but to the traders of this kingdom in general;" and clauses were enacted granting 5s. the quarter on the exportation of wheat, so long as the home price did not exceed 48s.; with other bounties of smaller amount upon the exportation of barley, malt, and rye. It was supposed that the farmers and land-

\* 1 Wm. and Mary, c. 12.



holders would thus be relieved from the distress arising from low prices. They were in possession of a market the sole supply of which they had secured to themselves by the act of 1670, and by the Bounty Act they endeavored to prevent that market being overstocked by their own commodity.

The seven years immediately succeeding 1693 were remarkable for a succession of unfavorable seasons. In the four years ending 1691 the price of wheat averaged 27*s.* 7*d.* the quarter, but in the four years preceding and including 1699 it reached 56*s.* 6*d.* The bounty was inoperative during this period, and was suspended by an act of Parliament from the 9th of February, 1699, to the 29th of September, 1700. Nevertheless, in order that no fears might be excited by this temporary suspension, the preamble contained an acknowledgment that the statute granting the bounty "was grounded upon the highest wisdom and prudence, and has succeeded, to the greatest benefit and advantage to the nation by the greatest encouragement of tillage."\* Before this temporary act had expired, another act was passed,† in 1700, by which the encouragement of the home corn-grower was carried still further by the abolition of all the then existing duties on the export of corn. "From 1697 to 1773 the total excess of exports was 30,968,366 quarters, upon which export bounties, amounting to 6,237,176*l.*, were paid out of the public revenue."‡ In 1750 the sum of 324,176*l.* was paid in bounties on corn. The exports of 1748-9-50 (during which, moreover, the price of wheat fell from 32*s.* 10½*d.* to 28*s.* 10¼*d.* the quarter) amounted to 2,120,000 quarters of wheat, and of all kinds of corn and grain to 3,825,000 quarters. This was the result of a cycle of abundant years. In the twenty-three years from 1692 to 1715, says Mr. Tooke, in his elaborate 'History of Prices,' there were eleven bad seasons, during which the average price of wheat was 45*s.* 8*d.* the

\* 12 Wm. III. c. 1.

† 11 and 12 Wm. III. c. 20.

‡ Report of Commons on Agric. Distress, 1821.

quarter; in the fifty years ending 1765 there were only five deficient harvests, and the average price for the whole half-century, ranged at 34s. 11d.; or, taking the ten years ending 1751, during which the crops were above an average, the price of wheat was only 29s. 2½d. the quarter.

These years of plenty seem to have been a very happy period to the bulk of the population. Adam Smith refers to "the peculiarly happy circumstances" of the country during these times of plenty; and Mr. Hallam describes the reign of George II. as "the most prosperous period that England had ever experienced." The effect was similar to that which took place during the plentiful seasons of the preceding century, and the improved condition of the people was marked by the enjoyment of greater comforts and the resort to a superior diet which their command over the necessities of life enabled them to obtain. "Bread made of wheat is become more generally the food of the laboring people," observes the author of the 'Corn Tracts,' writing in 1765. Referring to the same period, Mr. Malthus remarks:—"It is well known that during this period the price of corn fell considerably, while the wages of labor are stated to have risen. During the last forty years of the seventeenth century, and the first twenty of the eighteenth, the average price of corn was such as, compared with the wages of labor, would enable the laborer to purchase with a day's earnings two thirds of a peck of wheat. From 1720 to 1750 the price of wheat had so fallen, while wages had risen, that, instead of two thirds, the laborer could purchase the whole of a peck of wheat with a day's labor." Mr. Malthus adds that the result of this increased command over the necessities of life was not attended with an increase of population exclusively,—“a considerable portion of their increased net wages was expended in a marked improvement of the quality of the food consumed, and a decided elevation in the standard of their comforts and conveniences.” Trade was flourishing and the exports and

imports progressively increasing during this period of abundance.

The cycle of good seasons which the country had for so long a period fortunately enjoyed, (for twenty-six years, from 1730 to 1755, there had been only one unfavorable season,) was followed by a succession of bad years, in which the harvests proved as deficient as they had before been abundant. From 1765 to 1775 there was a very frequent recurrence of unfavorable years, and the last five years of this period were all of this character. In 1766, the quartern loaf was selling in London at 1s. 6d.; addresses were sent up from various parts of the country complaining of general distress; and a proclamation was issued suspending exportation, and for enforcing the laws against forestallers and regraters. Exportation was suspended also in the following year, as was the case also in 1770 and 1771. In 1772, importation was allowed duty-free to the 1st of May, 1773; and in this latter year the city of London offered a bounty of 4s. per quarter for 20,000 quarters of wheat, to be imported between March and June. The average prices of wheat had risen from 29s. 2½d. in the ten years ending 1751, to 51s. for the ten years ending 1774, being an advance of 75 per cent. The excess of exports from 1742 to 1751 had been 4,700,509 quarters of wheat, and, including all kinds of grain, had amounted to 8,869,190 quarters, but from 1766 to 1775 there was an excess of imports to the extent of 1,363,149 quarters of wheat, and 3,782,734 of corn and grain of all kinds. The old corn-law of 1689, under which a bounty on exportation had been granted, was now become a dead letter, in consequence of the high range of prices in the home market. The right to export had been frequently suspended, though only for short periods, in the hope that more plentiful harvests or the greater extension of tillage would again bring back the old state of things. These suspensions of the bounty excited the dissatisfaction of the ag-

riculturists. "From the year 1766 to the present time, (1773,) we have had a perpetual shifting policy, in which nothing has been permanent. \* \* \* \*

Every year has produced a temporary act suspending the operation of those laws which had proved of such excellent utility."\*

The increase of population after the peace of 1763 was rapidly advancing with the growth of trade and manufactures. In the reign of George I. there had only been sixteen enclosure acts passed; in the succeeding reign there were 226; but, stimulated by the high prices resulting from deficient harvests, the number of such acts from 1760 to 1772 inclusive, amounted to 585. The population of England and Wales had increased upwards of two millions during the century, being, according to the best estimates, 5,134,000 at its commencement, and in 1770 about 7,227,000. In the first *fifty* years of the century, the increase of population amounted only to seventeen per cent., but in the *twenty* years ending 1770, the rate of acceleration was more than doubled, being nineteen per cent.

Before passing to the next epoch in the history of the corn-trade, we shall notice the alterations which took place in the mode of ascertaining the average prices of corn and grain. Several acts for this purpose were made; in one of which, passed in 1729, the preamble states that the justices of the peace had "neglected to settle the price of corn at their quarter-sessions after Michaelmas last, and to return certificates thereof to the chief officer and collector of the customs residing in the respective ports where the said corn or grain has been or may be imported; by means whereof the said officers were at a loss how to charge the customs and duty due for such corn; which has been, and may be, a great loss to the revenue, and a detriment to the farmers and fair traders."

\* Arthur Young's "Political Arithmetic," 1774.

To remedy the negligence of the gentry, the collectors of customs were empowered to settle the averages.

In 1732, an attempt was again made "for the better ascertaining the common prices of middling English corn and grain, and for preventing the fraudulent importation of corn and grain." After 1st June, 1732, the justices of the peace, in counties which contained ports of importation, were to charge the grand jury at quarter-sessions to make inquiry and presentment upon oath of the common market-prices, which were to be certified to the officers at the ports specified. The averages were, however, only to be taken four times a-year.

In 1766, the authorities of the city of London were empowered to settle the price of middling English corn and grain, in January and July, in addition to the former periods of April and October.

It was not until 1770 that returns of prices were directed to be made weekly. In that year an act was passed, on the ground that a "register of the prices at which corn is sold in the several counties of Great Britain will be of public and general advantage." The justices of the peace were to order returns to be made weekly of the prices of British corn and grain, from such towns in each county as they thought proper; the number of towns selected in each county not being more than six, nor less than two. The treasury was to appoint a receiver of corn returns, who was to publish an abstract of the weekly returns in the "London Gazette," and four times a-year certify to the clerks of the peace the prices which were respectively prevalent in each county. The publication of the averages weekly was a most beneficial innovation.

In 1772, an important act\* was passed relating to the internal corn-trade, and several ancient restrictions in old stat-

\* 12 Geo. III. c. 71.

utes were removed, on the ground that, "by preventing a free trade in the said commodities, [corn, flour, cattle, &c.,] they have a tendency to discourage the growth and enhance the price of the same, which statutes, put into execution, would bring great distress on the inhabitants of many parts of the kingdom."

## CHAPTER IV.

## THIRD PERIOD.—FROM 1773 TO 1791.

The corn act of 1773—Its influence on tillage, navigation, &c.—Number of acres then under cultivation—The landed interests dependent upon foreign supplies—Dissatisfaction consequent on this—Average prices of corn at this period—Regulations of the London Corn Exchange—New regulations of 1788–89, respecting the maritime districts, &c.

IN the preamble of the Corn Act of 1773,\* it is acknowledged that previous laws had greatly tended to the advancement of tillage and navigation. It added that, on account of the small supplies on hand, and scanty crops, it had been frequently necessary to suspend the operation of the laws; and that a permanent law on the corn-trade “would afford encouragement to the farmer, be the means of increasing the growth of that necessary commodity, and of affording a cheaper and more constant supply to the poor.” And the act then fixes the following scale of duties, to come into operation on the 1st of January, 1774:—Whenever the price of middling British wheat, at ports of importation, was at or above 48s. per quarter, a duty of only 6*d.* per quarter was to be taken on all foreign wheat imported during the continuance of that price. When the price was at or above 44s., exportation and the bounty together were to cease; and the carrying of British grain coastwise ceased also. Under this act, corn and grain might be shipped to Ireland when exportation was prohibited from that country. Foreign corn, warehoused under bond in twenty-five ports of Great Britain mentioned in the act, might be re-exported duty free. Adam Smith’s opinion of this act was, that, “though not the best in itself, it is the best which the interests, prejudices, and

\* 13 Geo. III. c. 43.

temper of the times would admit of: it may perhaps, (he adds,) in due time prepare the way for a better.\* This expectation has not as yet been fulfilled.

The home market was now opened to foreign supplies of corn under much more advantageous terms than before. Importation was constant and considerable, and prices were steadier on the whole, during the eighteen years from 1775 to 1792—notwithstanding the occurrence of five seasons in which the harvests were more or less deficient—than they had been in the ten years preceding 1773. The balance of imports of wheat was now decidedly against this country. In the ten years ending 1769, the excess of exports had amounted to 1,384,561 quarters; but in the next ten years, ending 1779, the excess was on the side of the imports to the extent of 431,566 quarters; and in the ten years ending 1789, there was an excess on the same side amounting to 233,502 quarters. The extension of tillage which took place was certainly more likely to be permanent, than when it had been caused by the artificial stimulus that had previously been maintained. From 1760 to 1780, the number of acres enclosed under local acts was 1,912,350; in the ten years ending 1789, the proportion had fallen off, the number of acres enclosed being 450,180. The average price of wheat was 45*s.* the quarter in the ten years ending 1779, and 45*s.* 9*d.* in the ten years ending 1789. The extension of cultivation in the twenty years from 1760 to 1780, together with the improvement of agriculture, sufficed for the increased demands of the country, without breaking up so much fresh land.

The landed interest, however, alleged that the act of 1773 had rendered England dependent upon other countries for the supply of corn. The bounty by which the corn-growers had formerly profited, and which they were led to anticipate

\* *Wealth of Nations*, book iv. chap. 5.



would still be secured to them, had never come into operation under this act ; and hence a general dissatisfaction prevailed amongst them against the existing corn-law, which they had sufficient interest in the legislature to get altered in 1791.

At the commencement of the present period, the average prices of corn were struck four times a-year, at the quarter-sessions, and they could not be altered between the interval of one quarter-session and another. In 1774, however, an act was passed,\* and came into operation on the 1st of June, by which exportation was regulated by the price on the market-day preceding the shipment ; thus adopting the real average price at the time, instead of acting upon the average which existed three months before.

Six years afterward, in the session 1780-1,† it was enacted that the prices of English corn for the port of London, and the ports of Kent and Essex, should be determined by the averages taken at the London Corn Exchange. The weekly average was to regulate the exportation ; but the importation of foreign corn and grain was regulated by averages struck only once a quarter.

In the session of 1788-9, new regulations were framed,‡ applying to all parts of the kingdom, which was divided into twelve districts, and in each a number of the principal market-towns was selected, in which, and at the seaports, the price of corn was to be ascertained for each district. Weekly returns were to be made to the receiver in London, who, on the 1st of February, May, August, and November, was to compute from the returns of the six preceding weeks the average price of each description of British corn and grain, (with the exception of oats, the averages of which were to be computed on the returns of the twelve preceding weeks.) The aggregate average of the six weeks (and for oats of the

\* 14 Geo. III. c. 64.

† 21 Geo. III. c. 50.

‡ 29 Geo. III. c. 58.

twelve weeks) to be transmitted to the principal officer of the customs in each district, and to regulate the importation at each port of the said district. The export trade was still regulated by the weekly averages. Under this act, each of the twelve maritime districts was treated as distinct in itself, and counties on one side of the kingdom might be exporting their surplus produce to a foreign market, while those on the other side were under the necessity of importing.

## CHAPTER V.

## FOURTH PERIOD.—FROM 1791 TO 1804.

New scale of importation duties of 1791—Excess of importation, during the thirteen subsequent years, in England—Sacrifices induced by this—Scarcity of grain, and its consequences—Seizure of neutral vessels laden with corn—Parliamentary measures for economizing the consumption of wheat—The hair-powder tax imposed—Severe distress of the times—High prices—Increased scarcity—Further measures by the British House of Commons—Lord Hawkesbury's bill in 1800—New public projects to relieve the public distress—Increased high prices—The alloyance system—Riots, and great distress of the lower classes—Agricultural wages at this period—Comparative estimates of wages and provisions—Adam Smith's remarks on this subject—Remarks of Mr. Milne—Prosperity of the landlords at this time of dearth—Injurious results to trade of the act of Charles II., &c

THE new corn-law of 1791 was founded upon stricter principles than that of 1773. It enacted that after November 15, 1791, the bounty of 5*s.* per quarter should be paid when wheat was under 44*s.*, and that, when wheat was at or above 46*s.*, exportation was to cease. The new scale of import duties was as follows:—For wheat under 50*s.* per quarter, the "high duty" of 24*s.* 3*d.* was payable; at 50*s.*, but under 54*s.*, the "first low duty" of 2*s.* 6*d.*; at or above 54*s.*, the "second low duty" of 6*d.* was payable. The protecting price was thus raised from 48*s.* to 54*s.* the quarter; and this main feature of the act was intended to shut out supplies from abroad, and of course to raise prices at home. The duty of 24*s.* 3*d.*, so long as the price of wheat was under 50*s.* the quarter, was equivalent to a prohibition.

The thirteen years from 1791 to 1804 form a very eventful period in the history of the Corn Laws. Under the comparatively free system established by the Corn Act of 1773, the excess of imports had been comparatively trifling; but under an act expressly constructed to prevent importation as

far as possible, the excess of imports in the thirteen years from 1791 to 1803, amounted to 6,458,901 quarters of wheat and wheat-flour, and enormous sacrifices were made to obtain this quantity. The seasons in their courses fought against the enactments of the Legislature; and the dependence on foreign supplies was never so complete as at the very period when hopes had been entertained that the produce of the home-grower would prove sufficiently ample for the wants of the country.

The effects of the different years of scarcity, just at the close of the last and the commencement of the present century, cannot be passed over without a cursory notice. The harvest of 1793 had been below an average, and those of the two following years were decidedly deficient. The average price of wheat rose from 55*s.* 7*d.*, in January, 1795, to 108*s.* 4*d.*, in August. Parliament met in October, when the king's speech alluded to the "very high price of grain" as a subject of "the greatest anxiety." In the following month, the Chancellor of the Exchequer moved for the appointment of a select committee to inquire into the circumstances of the scarcity, and the means of removing it. Monopoly, forestalling, and regrating, were alleged to be among the causes of the dearth; and Lord Kenyon, at the Salop assizes, threatened to inflict the "full vengeance of the law," upon those parties who should be found guilty of these practices. The deficiency in the crops was variously estimated at from one fifth to one seventh; and to provide an adequate supply, an act was passed granting a bounty of from 16*s.* to 20*s.* the quarter, according to the quality, on wheat from the south of Europe, till the quantity should amount to 400,000 quarters: and from America, till it should amount to 500,000 quarters; and 12*s.* to 15*s.* from any other part of Europe, till it should amount to the same quantity; the bounty to be 8*s.* and 10*s.* after that quantity was exceeded. Neutral vessels laden with grain were forcibly seized on the high seas,

and the masters compelled to sell their cargoes to the government agents. The members of both houses of parliament bound themselves by a written pledge to observe the utmost frugality in the use of bread in their respective households; and engaged to reduce the consumption of wheat by at least one third of the usual quantity consumed in ordinary times, unless the average price of wheat should be reduced to 8s. the bushel. The hair-powder tax was imposed at this period, as a means of diminishing the consumption of wheat.

The high price of wheat produced severe distress. The agricultural districts were disturbed by riots, and that fatal measure—the allowance system—was introduced. For the next two or three years the harvests were more favorable, until the disastrous season of 1799. The average price of wheat at the commencement of that year was 49s. 6d. the quarter, but in December it had risen to 94s. 2d.; and soon after the commencement of the following year the prospects of scarcity had become so formidable that a select committee of the house of commons was appointed to investigate the deficiency in the last crop. In pursuance of the recommendation of this committee, recourse was again had to a bounty; and an act was passed, offering to the importer the difference between the average price of English wheat in the second week after importation, and 90s. on wheat from the south of Europe, Africa, and America; 85s. from the Baltic and Germany; and 90s. from Archangel, if imported before the 1st of October, 1800. Lord Hawkesbury also brought in a bill, which was passed through its various stages on the following day, prohibiting the sale of bread until twenty-four hours after it had been baked. Notwithstanding these prospective remedies, the average price of wheat continued to advance, and in June, 1800, was 134s. 5d. the quarter. Considerable importations brought down the price to 96s. 2d. in August; but in December it again advanced to 133s., in consequence of the deficiency of the harvest of 1800.

Parliament was assembled in November, 1800, at an earlier period than had been intended, for the purpose of devising measures to remedy the severe distress of the times, arising from the high prices of provisions. The speech from the throne alluded to the supposition of combination and fraudulent practices for the purpose of raising the price of grain, which a committee of the house of lords denied. A select committee of the commons was again appointed to take into consideration the existing high prices, and by the end of December this committee had presented six reports to the house, in the first of which the deficiency of the crops was stated to be one fourth, and that the old supplies were exhausted before harvest. The committee suggested a variety of remedies to meet the emergency. Among other things, they recommended the encouragement of the fisheries, the stoppage of the distilleries, a bounty on importation; also a recommendation from persons in authority, pointing out the necessity of the general practice of economy and frugality in all articles of food; and it was proposed to call upon the other house of parliament to join in an address to the throne, requesting his Majesty to issue a proclamation in recommendation of this suggestion. A royal proclamation was issued accordingly, and was widely circulated by the clergy and magistrates throughout the kingdom. An act was also passed, guaranteeing the difference between the average price of foreign wheat in the third week after importation, and 100s. to the importer of *all* wheat weighing 53lbs. per bushel, if imported within the time limited by the act. The advance of prices continued unchecked, in spite of the various plans adopted to lower them; and in March, 1801, wheat averaged 156s. 2d. the quarter, or, taking the imperial measure now in use, 20s. the bushel; barley averaged 90s. 7d. the quarter, and oats 47s. 2d. The importations of the year were, wheat 1,424,766 quarters; barley 113,966; oats 583,043. For four weeks, the quartern loaf in London was as high as 1s. 10½d.

The agricultural districts were again disturbed by riots, and the allowance system, introduced as a mode of relieving the distress of the poorest class, was becoming firmly established. They must otherwise have actually perished; and even the classes above them would have shared the same fate, but for the rise of wages and the contributions of parishes, and the aids afforded by friends and by private charity. All these artificial modes of adjustment were miserable expedients, and necessarily fell far short of placing those whom it was designed to benefit in the condition of comfort which they enjoyed when the price of food was low from the effects of abundance. The money wages of the agricultural laborer, in order to have been equal to those which he received in the reign of George II., should have risen to about 30s. per week. Arthur Young gives a list of articles which, when the laborer was paid 5s. per week, he could have purchased with that 5s., namely, a bushel of malt, a bushel of wheat, a pound of butter, a pound of cheese, and a pennyworth of tobacco; and he states that in 1801 these articles would have cost him 26s. 5d.; while wages having risen only to 9s., and the allowance from the parish being estimated at 6s., his real wages were still 11s. 5d. less than under the former period. Thus even the parish allowance, which equalled two thirds of his wages, left him in a state of distress. There is a table in the Appendix to one of the Parliamentary Reports on the subject of the high price of provisions, which shows that the most indispensable necessities of life had risen 200 per cent. in 1800 as compared with 1773. Both in 1795 and 1800 Mr. Whitbread had proposed a bill for regulating the wages of labor by the price of provisions, and fixing a minimum of wages, but such an expedient was wisely rejected. The rise of wages, without which actual starvation would have ensued, inadequate as it proved, was better than such a plan. Several trades succeeded in obtaining an advance; and from the statements of the tailors and printers of London, in support

of their claims, we take the following particulars:—The wages of the former class of workmen, from 1777 to 1795, had averaged 21s. 9d. per week, and the price of the quatern loaf being 7¼d., they could purchase thirty-six loaves with a week's wages. During the scarcity of 1795 their wages had been advanced to 25s., and in 1801 to 27s., in which latter year a week's wages would purchase only 18½ quatern loaves. The wages of compositors had been advanced from 24s. to 27s. in 1795, and to 30s. in 1801. The advance in the wages of carpenters, bricklayers, masons, and artisans of a similar stamp was inconsiderable. The salaries of persons holding official situations under the government were also increased. The misery of the bulk of the people during the years of scarcity is shown by the diminished number of marriages, which, from 79,477 in 1798, were reduced to 67,288 in 1801.

The fallacy that wages advance with the price of food was never more glaringly displayed than at this period; and it is still a prevalent notion that there is a connection between high prices of provisions and high wages, though, seventy years ago, Adam Smith had shown (and his doctrine on this subject has never been controverted)—1. That the real wages of labor rise in a year of plenty and diminish in a season of scarcity. In the former, the funds in the hands of the employers of industry are sufficient to maintain a greater number of industrious people, and, as masters wanting workmen bid against each other, money wages may also rise. 2. That a year of scarcity and high prices diminishes the funds for the employment of labor; persons are thrown out of employment who bid against one another in order to get it; and wages fall. 3. That in the *ordinary* variations of the price of provisions these two opposite causes are counterbalanced, which is one reason why the wages of labor are more steady and permanent than the price of provisions.\* In the evidence

\* Wealth of Nations, book i. chap. viii.



before the lords Committee on the Corn Laws in 1814 there is a remarkable illustration of the effect of the scarcity of 1812 on wages. Mr. Milne, a landowner, stated that a certain description of farm labor which twenty-five years before had cost him 3*s.*, and which a neighbor of his had paid 5*s.* for two or three years before, was executed during a period of scarcity and high prices for 2*s.* 6*d.*, the cause of this difference being, as he alleged, "that a great many laborers were idle from having little work, in consequence of those employed doing double work."

There was one class to whom the period of this memorable dearth was a season of great prosperity, that is, as Mr. Tooke states, "to the landlords, who were raising, or had the prospect of soon raising, their rents; and to the farmers, who were realizing enormous gains pending the currency of their leases." Arthur Young estimated the additional sum received by the corn-growers in 1795-6, as compared with the average of the twelve years ending 1794, at 19,553,849*l.*, allowing one fifth for the deficiency of the wheat crop. This large sum in the first instance found its way into the pockets of the farmers, and the landlords next advanced their claims to a portion of the advantage, and raised their rents.

A tolerably abundant harvest in 1801 happily put an end to the great dearth. In March the average price of wheat was 155*s.* the quarter; in June, with the prospect of a favorable harvest, it was 129*s.* 8*d.*, and at the end of the year the price had fallen to 75*s.* 6*d.* In the two following years the harvests, though not very abundant, were favorable, and a further depression of prices took place. At the close of 1802 the average price of wheat was 57*s.* 1*d.* the quarter; early in 1803, 52*s.* 3*d.*; and at a corresponding period in 1804 the average price was as low as 49*s.* 6*d.* Meetings were now held in the agricultural counties for the purpose of petitioning parliament for additional protection to agriculture, the act of

1790-1, which had raised the free import price\* from 48s. to 54s. having been unsuccessful. This brings us to the termination of the fourth period.

The act of 1790-1 consolidated, amended, and repealed a number of old statutes relating to the corn-trade; amongst the latter, the 15 Charles II. c. 7, which prohibited buying corn to sell again, and laying up corn in warehouses. It also permitted foreign corn and grain to be bonded in the king's warehouses, the duty to be payable only when taken out for home consumption. The object of this beneficial clause is stated as follows:—"To promote and extend the commerce of the merchants of this kingdom in foreign corn, and to provide stores which may always be ready for the relief of his Majesty's subjects in times of dearth."

Many of the provisions of the act, however, interfered with trade to a vexatious and injurious extent. When foreign exportation was not allowed at any particular port, not even home produce could be carried thence coastwise, even to a port at which exportation was at the time taking place. Foreign vessels might however change their destination to any port where importation was permitted, if, on their arrival at that for which their cargo had been shipped, importation had ceased to be allowed. The country was still divided into so many independent sections, and this regulation was introduced into Scotland, which was divided into four districts. For the purpose of exportation, the weekly averages of each district were cited, and, for importation, the average of the six weeks preceding the 15th of February, May, August, and November. Thus the one varied from week to week, and the latter was only changed four times a-year.

\* There was a nominal duty of 6d.

## CHAPTER VI.

## FIFTH PERIOD.—FROM 1804 TO 1815.

Amendments to the act of 1791, in 1804—Report of the committee—New importation rules—Increased value of wheat—Its consequences—Injurious effects of the war—Prohibitory enactments and decrees with respect to America, Berlin, &c.—Supplies from France and the Netherlands—High prices of the home markets—Increased taxation—Strike of the working-classes in 1812—Renewed riots—Subsequent reduction in prices—Reconsideration of the corn laws—Act permitting free interchange of corn between Ireland and England in 1806 . . . . . —

ON the 13th of April, 1804, the Chancellor of the Exchequer moved for the appointment of a select committee to inquire into the principle and operation of the Corn Regulation Act of 1791, and to determine whether the scale which it fixed for the regulation of imports and exports was now applicable. On the 14th of the ensuing month the committee presented their report, in which they stated that the act alluded to required “very material alteration.” On the 14th of June the committee presented a second report, in which their convictions as to the necessity of some new legislative measure on the trade in corn are thus stated:—“It appears to your committee that the price of corn from 1791 to the harvest of 1803 has been very irregular; but, upon an average, increased in a great degree by the years of scarcity, has in general yielded a fair profit to the grower. The casual high prices, however, have had the effect of stimulating industry, and bringing into culture large tracts of waste land, which, combined with the two last productive seasons, has occasioned such a depression in the value of grain as it is feared will greatly tend to the discouragement of agriculture, unless maintained by the support of parliament.” The committee founded their recommendations for protection on “a comparative view of the price of labor, and of the una-

voidable expenses incident to the farmer in the year 1791, and to the farmer at the present time." Their views prevailed also in the legislature, where a bill to give effect to them was introduced on the 20th of June.

The scale for the admission of foreign corn established by the act of 1804 was as follows:—Wheat under 63*s.* per quarter, the "high duty" of 24*s.* 3*d.* payable; at 63*s.* and under 66*s.* the "first low duty;" and at or above 66*s.*, the "second low duty," which amounted only to 6*d.* The free import or nominal duty price was thus raised from 54*s.*, at which it stood in the act of 1790-1, to 66*s.*—an increase of 12*s.* The bounty of 5*s.* on exportation was to be paid when the average price of wheat was at or under 48*s.*; and when the average rose to 54*s.* exportation to be prohibited. The two latter enactments proved totally inoperative.

Immediately after the passing of this act the price of wheat and other grain rose, a circumstance which was at first attributed by many to that measure. Between March and December the average price had increased from 49*s.* 6*d.* the quarter to 86*s.* 2*d.*; and in the spring of the following year petitions were presented to parliament expressing dissatisfaction with the new act on account of its alleged operation on prices. The crops in 1804, however, proved very deficient, and it is therefore more correct to attribute the rise to this cause. In the three following seasons the harvests were not abundant, and in the five years from 1808 to 1812 they were very deficient. In the month of August, in the latter year, the average prices were—for wheat 155*s.*, barley 79*s.* 10*d.*, and oats 56*s.* 2*d.*; and Mr. Tooke says\* that in Mark-lane the finest Dantzic wheat fetched 180*s.*, and oats in one or two instances were sold at the enormous price of 84*s.* the quarter.

Coincident with the unfavorable seasons during this period there was the effect of the great war in which we were then

\* Hist. of Prices, i. 323.

engaged, which in various ways increased the cost of production, and by impeding commercial intercourse rendered it difficult and expensive to obtain supplies from abroad at a time when our own harvests were inadequate. These obstacles were at one time so serious from the effect of the Berlin and Milan Decrees and the American Non-intercourse Act, as to threaten us with total exclusion from the continental ports. But, notwithstanding the anti-commercial spirit which the war had assumed, and at a period when this influence was relied upon as a most powerful means of distressing this country, licenses were granted by the French government, in consequence of which about 400,000 quarters of wheat, besides other grain, were imported to supply the deficiency of the harvest of 1809 in this country. The harvest, both in France and the Netherlands, had been very abundant, and the export of a part of their surplus produce was a great relief to the corn-growers of those countries. In 1810, we imported 1,500,000 quarters of wheat and flour, and 600,000 quarters of other grain and meal. The expenses of freight, insurance, and licenses, amounted to from 30s. to 50s. per quarter on wheat. From 1809 to 1812 the freight and insurance on wheat from the Baltic was 50s. the quarter. Prices necessarily rose to a great height in the home market before the obstacles to commercial intercourse arising from the war could be overcome, and an average price of 80s. the quarter for wheat was at times insufficient to lead to any considerable importation. The enormous charges on importation were of course added to the natural price of British corn; and thus we have easily explained the cause of the "war prices" of this memorable period and of the extraordinary profits of farmers and landowners.

The high prices stimulated cultivation, and from 1804 to 1814 inclusively the number of enclosure bills which received the royal assent was 1084, being considerably more than for any other corresponding period. The state of the

agricultural interest at this time has been impartially described by Mr. Tooke :—A great amount of gain had been distributed among the agricultural classes ; and as the range of high prices (with an interval of depression between the harvests of 1810 and 1811, so short as not to have been felt at all by the landlord, and very little by the farmer) had been of an unusually long continuance, it was concluded that the causes of that high range were permanent. From 1809 to 1813 was accordingly the period in which rents experienced their greatest rise,—that is, upon the expiration of leases, they were advanced in full proportion to the high range of the prices of produce ; and in several instances they were raised threefold or upwards of what they had been in 1792.\* In an ensuing period we shall see the disasters which the farmers experienced under other circumstances in consequence of the dangerous state of artificial prosperity in which they were placed during the war.

The effect of another cycle of bad seasons, to which is to be added increasing taxation, was not favorable to the interests of the working-classes. In 1812 and 1813 the poor-rates amounted to about 3,300,000*l.* more than they had been in 1803, a year of low prices and agricultural distress. Still further attempts had been made to adjust wages to the high price of provisions, and the demand of men for the navy and army offered a resource which frequently rendered the strikes of workmen for advanced wages successful. The wages of artisans and laborers were nearly doubled, that is, the money value of their wages ; but their real value—the command of a week's earnings over the necessities of life—was diminished. The rise of money wages had reached its maximum in 1812. The workmen employed in manufactures experienced severe distress during this period ; the advance of wages was less in their case than that of any other class ; in

\* Hist. of Prices, i. 323-6.

some branches of manufacture there had been no change ; in others it was accompanied by longer hours of work ; and the stagnation of the export trade occasioned nearly a total cessation of employment in several branches of manufacturing industry. Many parts of the country were disturbed by riots in consequence of the inability of the poorer classes to purchase an adequate share of food during these seasons of agricultural prosperity and high prices arising from defective harvests and the other causes to which allusion has been made.

A year or two of low prices of agricultural produce again brought to a close another period in the history of the Corn Laws. Wheat, which had been sold as high as 180s. the quarter (for select parcels) in 1812, fell to 73s. 6*d.* after the abundant harvest of 1813 ; and after that of 1814, which was rather favorable than otherwise, the average price was reduced to 53s. 7*d.* the quarter. This fall in prices and the cessation of hostilities led to the reconsideration of the whole question of the Corn Law.

During the present period an important change was made in the mode of striking the average prices of corn and grain. The twelve maritime districts of England, and the four similar districts of Scotland, ceased to be regarded as sixteen separate sections, each of which was regulated by the prices prevalent within its separate limits ; but for England, the averages, taken as before, were computed for the whole of the twelve districts at once, and the average price obtained from the computation regulated importation and exportation at seaports situate in any part of the country ; and for Scotland the same plan was pursued. The six weeks' averages, struck quarterly, regulated the import duty, and the weekly average the exports.

In 1806 was passed " An Act to permit the free Interchange of every Species of Grain between Great Britain and Ireland."\* Ireland had been previously treated as a colony,

\* 46 Geo. III. c. 97.

but this act placed her on an equality with other parts of the kingdom, and, for oats, has rendered Ireland the granary of England. In 1838 nearly two million quarters (1,948,380) of oats and oatmeal were imported into Great Britain from Ireland, and the supply is yearly increasing : the imports of wheat from the sister kingdom have been gradually diminishing since 1832, when the quantity was 552,741 quarters.



## CHAPTER VII.

## SIXTH PERIOD.—FROM 1815 TO 1822.

The new importation act of 1815—Average prices of the previous year—Popular commotion—Appeal to military force—Protest of the minority against the passage of the bill—Restrictive character of the act—Regulation of prices, and their fluctuating character—Fresh proposals in Parliament—Huskinson's resolutions, &c.—New project of the Committee in 1821—Plans for the alleviation of the agricultural distress in 1822—Advance of wages—Proposition for an exchequer loan of £100,000, by Lord Londonderry

THE corn-law of 1815 originated in the desire to preserve, during a state of peace, the high rents and prices which had existed during the war. The war had been a period of scarcity, arising from various causes, and the real effect of this measure was to perpetuate the high prices and high rents by an artificial scarcity. On the 10th of June, 1814, a committee of the house of lords on the corn-trade was appointed, which made a brief report on the 27th, when the committee was instructed to examine witnesses in support of allegations contained in petitions presented to the house on the subject. The principal feature of the second report was the recommendation of the committee that so long as the average price of wheat was under 80s. the ports should be completely closed against supplies from other countries. The prohibitive price, suggested by the agricultural witnesses examined by the committee, varied from 72s. to 96s. Out of sixteen witnesses belonging to this class, only four were in favor of the free importation price being below 80s. per quarter. This second report was presented on the 25th of July; but the attempt to give so complete a monopoly as would have been established by carrying out the recommendations of the lords' committee was so resolutely opposed by the country, that the bill which had been brought in for the pur-

pose was abandoned. An act was however passed, repealing the bounty on exportation,\* which had been allowed under various circumstances since 1688, though, from 1792, the high prices which prevailed in the home market rendered it inoperative. By the new act, exportation might take place at any time without reference to prevailing prices.

The average price of wheat for the year 1814 was about 34s. per quarter lower than the average of the preceding year, though the harvest had not been an abundant one. In the month of February, 1815, the average price was under 60s., and before harvest it might rise to 66s., when the ports would be open, and prices again be depressed, and it was brought to a very low point, in consequence of the obstacles to free intercourse with the continent being removed. Early in the session of 1815, therefore, a bill was brought in, giving effect to the recommendation of the committee of the previous year, and fixing 80s. as the lowest point at which importation could take place. The measure produced great excitement throughout the country, particularly in the manufacturing districts and in all the large towns. In the house of commons, at an early period, a division took place in favor of 72s. being substituted for 80s., with the following result:—For the motion, 35; against it, 144; majority, 119. On the 3d of March, an attempt was made to throw out the bill:—For the motion, 56; against it, 218; majority, 162. On the 6th of March, the vicinity of the house of commons was thronged by an excited multitude, and several members were stopped, some of them roughly handled, and they were questioned by the mob as to the vote which they intended to give. Ultimately the military were called out, and, with the civil force, kept the streets clear. This evening the gallery of the house of commons was closed. An attempt was made to render the bill more favorable by substituting 74s. instead

\* 54 Geo. III. c. 69.

of 80s. as the pivot price ; and the motion was supported by 77 against 208, being a majority of 131. On the 8th of May, on bringing up the report, an amendment was moved, that the bill be read that day six months, when there voted 50 in its favor, and 168 against it ; majority 118. A final attempt was made to substitute a lower rate than 80s., leaving it to the house to determine the exact price at which prohibition ceased ; but only 78 voted for the motion, and 184 in favor of the measure as originally proposed. On the 10th of March, on the third reading, an amendment was moved that the bill be thrown out, but it was only supported by 77 against 245 ; majority 168. On the 20th of March, the bill passed the lords by a majority of 107 :—128 contents, and 21 non-contents. The measure was opposed with great force and acuteness by several of the most eminent statesmen of the day ; and Lord Grenville drew up a protest, embodying the views of the leaders of the minority. We give a copy of this historical document :—

“ PROTEST.

“ 1. Because we are adverse in principle to all new restraints on commerce. We think it certain that public prosperity is best promoted by leaving uncontrolled the free current of national industry ; and we wish, rather, by well-considered steps, to bring back our commercial legislation to the straight and simple line of wisdom, than to increase the deviation, by subjecting additional and extensive branches of the public interest to fresh systems of artificial and injurious restriction.

“ 2. Because we think that the great practical rule of leaving our commerce unfettered applies more peculiarly, and on still stronger grounds of justice, as well as of policy, to the corn-trade, than to any other. Irresistible, indeed, must be the necessity which could, in our judgment, authorize the legislature to tamper with the sustenance of the peo-

ple, and to impede the free purchase and sale of that article on which depends the existence of so large a portion of the community.

“3. Because we think that the expectations of ultimate benefit from this measure are founded on a delusive theory. We cannot persuade ourselves that this law will ever contribute to produce plenty, cheapness, or steadiness of price. So long as it operates at all, its effects must be the opposite of these. Monopoly is the parent of scarcity, of dearness, and of uncertainty. To cut off any of the sources of supply can only tend to lessen its abundance; to close against ourselves the cheapest market for any commodity, must enhance the price at which we purchase it; and to confine the consumer of corn to the produce of his own country, is to refuse to ourselves the benefit of that provision which Providence itself has made for equallizing to man the variations of season and of climate.

“4. But, whatever may be the future consequences of this law, at some distant and uncertain period, we see, with pain, that those hopes must be purchased at the expense of a great and present evil. To compel the consumer to purchase corn dearer at home than it might be imported from abroad, is the immediate practical effect of this law. In this way alone can it operate. Its present protection, its promised extension of agriculture, must result (if at all) from the profits which it creates by keeping up the price of corn to an artificial level. These future benefits are the consequences expected, but, as we confidently believe, erroneously expected, from giving a bounty to the grower of corn, by a tax levied on its consumer.

“5. Because we think that the adoption of any permanent law for such a purpose required the fullest and most laborious investigation. Nor would it have been sufficient for our satisfaction could we have been convinced of the general policy of so hazardous an experiment. A still further inquiry

would have been necessary to persuade us that the present moment was fit for its adoption. In such an inquiry we must have had the means of satisfying ourselves what its immediate operation will be, as connected with the various and pressing circumstances of public difficulty and distress with which the country is now surrounded ; with the state of circulation and currency ; of our agriculture and manufactures ; of our internal and external commerce ; and, above all, with the condition and reward of the industrious laboring classes of our community. On all these particulars, as they respect this question, we think that parliament is almost wholly uninformed ; on all, we see reason for the utmost anxiety and alarm from the operation of this law.

“ Lastly. Because, if we could approve of the principle and purpose of this law, we think that no sufficient foundation has been laid for its details. The evidence before us, unsatisfactory and imperfect as it is, seems to us rather to disprove than to support the propriety of the high price adopted as the standard of importation, and the fallacious mode by which that price is to be ascertained.

“ And on all these grounds we are anxious to record our dissent from a measure so precipitate in its course, and, as we fear, so injurious in its consequences.

“ AUGUSTUS FREDERICK	“ TORRINGTON,
(Duke of Sussex,) DUTTON (Marquis of Douglas,)	
WILLIAM FREDERICK	CHANDOS BUCKINGHAM,
(Duke of Gloucester,) MONTFORT,	
GRENVILLE,	KING,
WELLESLEY,	CARLISLE.”
ESSEX,	

On the 23d of March the bill received the royal assent.

Until the average price of wheat rose to 80s. the ports were to be effectually closed. Colonial wheat was admitted when the average prices reached 67s. per quarter. Such was the

leading feature of the new act.\* But the mode in which the average prices were determined greatly increased its stringency. A new average was to be struck quarterly, on the 15th of February, May, August, and November, from the aggregate prices of the six preceding weeks; but it was provided that, if during the six weeks subsequent to any of these dates the average prices, which might be at 80s., fell below that price, no supplies should be admitted for home consumption from any ports between the rivers Eyder and the Bidasoa,—that is, from Denmark to Spain.

It was the general expectation of the farmers that the act of 1815 would maintain the prices of their produce at a rate somewhat under that of the scale which the legislature had adopted; and which, for wheat, was 80s.; barley 40s.; oats 27s.; and rye, beans, and peas, 53s. They entered into contracts with their landlords and others with this conviction. But, as in every measure passed since 1773 prices had risen above the scale which had been fixed as the prohibitive rate, it happened that they now sunk below it to an extent which they had not anticipated. In 1816, 1817, and 1818, three deficient harvests occurred, that of the former year being below an average crop to a greater extent than in any year since the periods of scarcity at the close of the last century. Prices rose above the rate at which foreign supplies were admitted, and in 1817 and 1818 above 2,600,000 quarters of wheat were imported. In 1821 and 1822 the agriculturists endured the severest season of distress which had been experienced by that body in modern times, and the engagements which they had been induced to make under the fallacious hopes excited by the last Corn Act and the range of high prices during the war occasioned them to be swept from the land by thousands. In the week ending December 21st, 1822, the average prices of corn and grain were as follow:—

Wheat.		Barley.		Oats.		Rye.		Beans.		Peas.	
s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.
38	8	29	4	18	9	23	6	28	10	29	4
Being 41	4	10	8	8	3	29	6	24	2	23	8

lower than the scale which was framed for the farmer's protection. The harvest of 1820 was estimated as one fourth above an average crop, and by some, who included the extended breadth of wheat under cultivation in consequence of the high prices of 1816-17-18, the surplus was computed at about one third above the average,—that is, there was a surplus of between 3 and 4 million quarters of wheat, for which there was no demand. The crop of 1821 was large, but of inferior quality; that of 1822 was above an average, and the harvest was unusually early. The cause of the great fall of prices and of its distressing effects on the farmers was sufficiently obvious. They were under leases and rents founded upon an extraordinary conjuncture of bad seasons with a state of war, and were buoyed up by an act which promised to exclude supplies of foreign grain.

The fluctuations in price under the corn-law of 1815 were as extraordinary as they were unexpected by the landed interests, and amounted to 199½ per cent.

The cry of agricultural distress was now heard from every part of the country, and never ceased to ring in the ears of the legislature during the years 1820-1-2. Committees of the house of commons were appointed to inquire into the condition of agriculture in the two latter years, and numerous plans were conceived for the relief of the agricultural class. In parliament Sir Thomas Lethbridge proposed a permanent duty on foreign wheat of 40s. per quarter, and he claimed protection for every description of produce raised from British soil. Mr. Benett's plan was a permanent duty of 24s. per quarter after the averages had again reached 80s., and a drawback of 18s. per quarter to be allowed on the exportation of wheat of marketable quality. Mr. Curwen suggested

to the House that when the average price of wheat reached 80s. the ports should be opened for the admission of 400,000 quarters of foreign wheat, at a duty of 10s. ; and if, six weeks after this quantity had been admitted, the average price should still continue above 80s., then to allow of the importation of an additional 400,000 quarters, at a duty of 5s. The late Mr. Ricardo moved resolutions to the effect that when the averages rose to 65s. per quarter all the foreign wheat then in bond should be liberated at a duty of 15s. ; and that afterward, whenever the averages exceeded 70s., the trade in wheat should be free, at a permanent duty of 20s. : one year from that time the duty to be reduced to 19s., and a similar reduction to be made each year until the duty was 10s., at which it should be permanently fixed ; at the same time allowing a drawback or bounty on exportation of 7s. per quarter.

The resolutions moved by Mr. Huskisson, on the 29th of April, during the agricultural panic of 1822, show that he took a calm and rational view of the subject. They were to the following effect :—That in February, 1819, the average price of wheat was 78s. 7d. per quarter, and the total quantity of wheat imported during the year was only 300,416 quarters. In 1820 the average price of wheat was 65s. 10d., and the foreign supplies of wheat arriving in the port of London were under 400,000 quarters ; and in 1821 the average price was still lower, being 54s. 5d., and the foreign supplies in the same port were under 500,000 quarters for the year. In January, February, and March, 1822, the average price was lower still, being 47s. 9d., and the ports were closed. Mr. Huskisson's second resolution was to the effect that, " during the whole of this period of three years, the supply in all the principal markets of the United Kingdom appears uniformly to have exceeded the demand, notwithstanding the wants of an increasing population, and other circumstances which have probably produced an increased consumption."



The third resolution showed—"That the excess of the supply above the demand must have arisen either from an extent of corn tillage more than commensurate to the average consumption of the country, or from a succession of abundant harvests upon the same extent of tillage, or from the coincident effect of both these causes." To prevent the alternate evils of scarcity and redundance, Mr. Huskisson proposed that the trade should be permanently free at a duty of 15s. per quarter, when the averages were under 80s.; and when above 80s. the duty to be 5s.; and above 85s. a nominal duty of 1s. only to be imposed.

The Select Committee of the house of commons had a still greater variety of projects offered for its consideration. One plan proposed to the Committee of 1821 was to withdraw the permission to warehouse foreign wheat or any other foreign grain in England; and the Committee felt itself under the necessity of arguing this point in their report, by showing the pernicious effect of such a regulation on the shipping interest, and on the country generally. The Committee of 1822 had under its serious consideration two plans for the alleviation of agricultural distress:—1. The application of 1,000,000*l.* in Exchequer bills, to be employed through the agency of government in buying up a certain quantity of British wheat to be placed in store. 2. Advances to be made to individuals on produce deposited in warehouses, to prevent them coming into the market simultaneously. The first plan was rejected by the Committee, but they considered the second was feasible, and were of opinion that "the sum of 1,000,000*l.* so employed (in loans on stock,) would probably be fully adequate to give a temporary check to the excess which is continually poured into the overstocked market." Having reaped the full advantage of high prices, it could only be as a matter of expedience rather than of equity that the agriculturists should be exempt from the effects of a return of peace and plenty. In the house of lords, the Marquis of London-

derry, on the 29th of April, moved that 1,000,000*l.* be advanced in Exchequer bills, when the average price of wheat was under 60*s.*

There was one class to whom the low prices of 1820-1-2 were advantageous. It is admitted beyond a doubt that the laborer and artisan were in a much more contented and prosperous state in these years than they had probably been for thirty years before. Wages had risen, and they did not fall in the same proportion (if in some cases they fell at all) with the low prices of agricultural produce. In the dear years of 1812-17-19, the country was in a disturbed state; but in 1820-1-2 the laboring classes were peaceful and contented. After the peace, the continent being opened to our manufactures, the population engaged in this branch of national industry, which had experienced the severest distress during the war, was now placed in a position of greater comfort from the stimulus given to the pursuits in which they were engaged.

The fall of prices in 1820-1-2 had fully demonstrated the futility of the corn-law of 1815, and it was therefore proposed to modify it.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## SEVENTH PERIOD.—FROM 1822 TO 1828.

Defects of the law of 1815—Extraordinary disparity of prices from 1804 to 1815—Amendments to the foregoing act—Their intentions, and the failure of them—The importation act of 1826—The act of indemnity for this order—Canning's measures in 1827 for graduated scale of duties—Modifications by the Duke of Wellington—Improvements in the corn trade in North American colonies—Novel scale of importation charges—Inefficiency of the fluctuating scale, &c. . . . . —

THE framers of the corn-law of 1815 did not take into account the effect of the years of scarcity which occurred so frequently after 1804, nor the obstruction of foreign supplies caused by the war. It was founded on the supposition that, high as were the average prices of those years, they were only such as resulted from the cost of production, with the addition of the farmer's profits and the landlord's rent, (both calculated on too high a scale.) In the interval between 1804 and 1815, whenever a foreign supply of corn was required, the home market rose to an elevation sufficient to command a supply subject to enormous charges, amounting to from 30s. to 50s. the quarter. Freight, insurance, and other charges, which had amounted to 50s. the quarter from the Baltic, have been as low as 4s. 6d. within the last few years, but the difference between a free and obstructed intercourse was taken as little into account as the influence of a series of defective crops. Prices having sunk so much below the amount which had been assumed to be necessary to remunerate the British corn-growers, the law of 1815 was suspended by a new act passed in July, 1822. It enacted that, "as soon as foreign wheat shall have been admitted for home consumption under the provisions of the Act of 55 Geo. III. c. 26 [the corn-law of 1815,] the scale of prices at which

the home consumption of foreign corn, meal, or flour is permitted by the said Act shall cease and determine." The new scale was as follows:—Wheat at or above 70s., duty 12s. ; and for the first three months of the ports being open an additional duty of 5s. per quarter, being a duty 17s. Above 70s. and under 80s., the "first low duty" of 5s. with the addition of 5s. for the first three months ; above 80s. and under 85s., the "second low duty" of 1s. was alone to be charged.

This act did not come into operation at all, as prices never reached 80s. It is justly described as being merely a pretended relaxation of the former act ; for, though the limit of total prohibition was lowered from 80s. to 70s., yet, if the act had come into operation, the duty would have rendered it more severe than the measure of which it was substituted as an improvement. With the exception of some barley, no corn was ever brought from abroad under the provisions of this act. But in 1826, in consequence of the unfavorable harvest, a temporary act was passed, admitting a quantity of foreign grain for home consumption. Next year the government was driven to a still more decisive step. In the spring of the year ministers had stated that it was not their intention to liberate the corn then in bond, upon which prices immediately rose. This was followed by some disturbances in the manufacturing districts, to allay which the government, on the 1st of May, proposed to parliament to release the bonded corn, and, as a measure of precaution, required to be invested with powers to admit during the recess of parliament an additional quantity, not exceeding 500,000 quarters, in case the harvest proved deficient. These powers were acted upon, and on September 1 an Order in Council was issued, admitting certain descriptions of grain for home consumption, until forty days after the next meeting of parliament, at an almost nominal rate of duty, on the ground that, "if the importation for home consumption of oats and oatmeal, and of

rye, peas, and beans, be not immediately permitted, there is great cause to fear that much distress may ensue to all classes of his Majesty's subjects." In the ensuing session of parliament ministers obtained an act of indemnity for this order.

In 1827, after these indications of imperfection had given strength to the opinion that some other system must be devised, Mr. Canning introduced certain resolutions in the house of commons, the leading principle of which was to permit importation at all times by substituting a graduated scale of duties in place of absolute prohibition under 80s. A bill was brought in, founded on these resolutions, fixing a duty of 1s. on foreign wheat when the average price was 70s. per quarter; a duty of 2s. being imposed for the reduction of each shilling in the averages. In respect to colonial wheat, the duty was fixed at 6d. when the averages were 65s. per quarter, and when under that sum at 5s. per quarter. The bill was not carried through the house of lords, the Duke of Wellington having moved and carried a clause the effect of which was to destroy the principal feature of the measure, by keeping the ports entirely shut so long as the price of wheat was under 66s. the quarter. An act was, however, passed during this session to permit corn, meal, &c., warehoused on the 1st of July, 1827, to be entered for home consumption upon payment of duties according to a fluctuating scale. About 572,000 quarters of wheat and flour were entered for consumption under this act, at a duty averaging above 20s. per quarter. The harvest had not been defective, and this was the very reason why the corn in bond was released notwithstanding the high duty, as there was no prospect of prices advancing. The additional supply under such circumstances caused a considerable depression in the home market.

In 1821 a new act was passed relative to the averages. Instead of "the maritime districts," 148 towns were named,

for which the magistrates were to appoint inspectors to make a return of the weekly purchases.

In 1825 the trade in corn and grain to the British colonies in North America was placed on a more favorable footing. The regulations under which the timber-trade is carried on, and which favor these colonies, have to a considerable extent directed their industry into other channels than those of agriculture. During one or two seasons, recently the United States, also, instead of having a surplus supply of wheat, have been under the necessity of importing that grain, the industry of the country having been diverted from agriculture to manufactures.

The six weeks' averages still regulated the amount of duty on importation, but they were greatly improved by being every week subject to an alteration. Each week the receiver of corn returns struck out one week's averages, admitting those last received, and thereby affecting the aggregate average, as prices rose or fell from week to week. The introduction of a fluctuating scale of duty was an important step, and its effect will be considered in the next period.

It was impossible to continue any longer a system which, for three successive years, 1825-6-7, had been compelled to bend to the force of temporary circumstances; and like previous measures it was abandoned by its supporters either as inefficient or injurious. Such a state of things brings us to another period in the history of the corn-law legislation.

## CHAPTER IX.

## EIGHTH PERIOD.—FROM 1828 TO THE PRESENT TIME.

Lord Glenelg's bill in 1828—Still in force—Its character and provisions—Average scale of prices, contrasted with that of Canning—Its inefficiency in preventing fluctuating prices—The distress of 1833 and 1836—Condition of landlords and tenants—Theory of Gregory King—Prices in 1835 and '39—Estimated consumption of corn in Great Britain, its cost, &c.—Causes of stagnation of trade, &c. . . . . —

IN 1828 Mr. Charles Grant (now Lord Glenelg) introduced a series of resolutions slightly differing from those which had been moved by Mr. Canning, and they were eventually embodied in a bill which was carried through both Houses, and received the royal assent on the 15th of July. This measure, by which the corn-trade is at present regulated, is entitled "An Act to amend the Laws relating to the Importation of Corn," and repeals 55 Geo. III. c. 26 (1815;) 3 Geo. IV. c. 60 (1822;) and 7 and 8 Geo. IV., c. 58 (1827.) The provisions for settling the averages under this act are as follows:—In one hundred and fifty towns in England and Wales, mentioned in the act, corn-dealers are required to make a declaration that they will return an accurate account of their purchases. [In London, the sellers make the return.] Inspectors are appointed in each of these one hundred and fifty towns, who transmit returns to the Receiver in the Corn Department of the Board of Trade, whose duty it is to compute the average weekly price of each description of grain, and the aggregate average price for the previous six weeks, and to transmit a certified copy to the collectors of customs at the different outports. The return on which the average prices are based is published every Friday in "The London Gazette." The aggregate average for six weeks regulates the duty on importation. In 1837 the quantity of British

wheat sold in these towns was 3,888,957 quarters ; in 1838 there were 4,064,305 quarters returned as sold ; and 3,174,680 quarters in 1839.

Wheat at 50*s.* pays a duty of 36*s.* 8*d.* ; barley at 32*s.* a duty of 13*s.* 10*d.* ; oats at 24*s.* a duty of 10*s.* 9*d.* ; rye, peas, and beans, at 35*s.* a duty of 16*s.* 9*d.* In the case of wheat, when the price is 66*s.*, for every shilling that the price falls the duty increases by 1*s.*, and decreases by the same sum for every shilling that the price rises (see the third column of the following scale ; ) for all other grain the duty increases by 1*s.* 6*d.* for every shilling that the price rises. Colonial wheat is admitted at a duty of 6*d.* when the average of the six weeks is at or above 67*s.* ; and when below 67*s.* the duty is 5*s.* the quarter, and for other grain in proportion. Importation is free on payment of 1*s.* on the quarter when wheat in the home market is 73*s.* ; barley 41*s.* ; oats 31*s.* ; and rye, peas, and beans 46*s.* the quarter.

In the following Table the scale of duties proposed by Mr. Canning, and that adopted by the legislature in 1828, and acted upon up to the present time, are placed in juxtaposition :—

Average Prices of Wheat.		Duty according to Mr. Canning's Bill.		Duty according to the present Scale.
<i>s.</i>		<i>s.</i>		<i>s. d.</i>
73	....	1	....	1 0
72	....	1	....	2 8
71	....	1	....	6 8
70	....	1	....	10 8
69	....	2	....	13 8
68	....	4	....	16 8
67	....	6	....	18 8
66	....	8	....	20 8
65	....	10	....	21 8
64	....	12	....	22 8
63	....	14	....	23 8



Average Prices of Wheat.		Duty according to Mr. Canning's Bill.		Duty according to the present Scale.
s.		s.		s. d.
62	....	16	....	24 8
61	....	18	....	25 8
60	....	20	....	26 8
59	....	22	....	27
58	....	24	....	28 8
57	....	26	....	29 8
56	....	28	....	30 8
55	....	30	....	31 8
54	....	32	....	32 8
53	....	34	....	33 8

The present law has not succeeded in maintaining steadiness of price, the extremes of fluctuation being 35s. 4d. in December, 1835, and 81s. in January, 1839, or a difference of 129 per cent. To this derangement of prices is to be attributed much of the depression which the agriculturists experienced in 1833 and 1836. In each of these years their distressed condition was noticed in the speech from the throne on the opening of parliament, and select committees were appointed in both years to inquire into their state. Since the commencement of 1836 nothing has been heard of agricultural distress, prices having risen from 39s. 4d. per quarter for wheat in 1835 to 70s. 8d. in 1839; but the commercial and manufacturing interests have been visited with a season of adversity.

When the harvests have been abundant, the laborer and artisan contented, and trade and manufactures flourishing, the agriculturist has suffered from the depreciation of prices. If abundant crops thus plunge him into distress, there can be no other reason for it than the engagements which he has contracted with his landlord being adapted only for years of scarcity and high prices, such as occurred during the war, when the effect of unfavorable seasons was aggravated by the

obstructions to commercial intercourse. The tenant now seems to be dependent upon years of deficiency in order to realize the average rate of profit on his capital ; and so long as the price of grain is subject to such great fluctuations as have been already stated, there is no permanent basis on which he can contract with his landlord. His rent must be determined by the rate of prices when he takes his lease, which may turn out in the long-run to be favorable either to himself or his landlord.

Gregory King, an economist of the seventeenth century, endeavored to prove that a strict rule of proportion existed between a given defect of the harvest and the corresponding rise of prices. The *principle* of his theory is undoubtedly true. The average price of wheat for 1835 was under 40s. the quarter, and for 1839 it was 80 per cent. higher, or 70s. 8d. ; yet no one will assert that the crops were nearly one half below an average, or even one fourth, as in the great scarcity of 1816. The deficiency of 1839 is not estimated as more than one seventh, or at the utmost one fifth ; yet prices rose to nearly double their amount in 1835. Assuming the consumption of Great Britain to be 16,000,000 quarters of wheat, the sum paid for a year's consumption would be about 31,000,000*l.* in 1835, while the same quantity would cost 56,000,000*l.* in 1839. The difference, amounting to 25,000,000*l.*, does not go into the pockets of the farmer, otherwise two or three abundant years and low prices would not occasion him embarrassment, but it is abstracted in the shape of rent, and neither the farmer nor the laborer has any advantage from it. So large a sum withdrawn from the usual channels of circulation creates stagnation in the different branches of non-agricultural industry ; and thus in dear years those interests are always in a languishing and embarrassed state ; though if high prices were good, they would be beneficial to both interests. In years of low prices the scale is turned ; the manufacturers become prosperous, and

the agriculturist is distressed. Steadiness in the price of so important an article as bread-corn is essential to the welfare of every class.

Although, after a deficient harvest, prices rise beyond the ratio of the deficiency, yet in abundant seasons they do not fall in the same ratio as produce is superabundant, as the wealthier corn-growers are enabled to keep back their supplies.

What is wanted is, at least, such an importation of foreign supplies as would check the excess of prices, and render them no more than equivalent to the proportion in which the crops are deficient. This is not effected under the present scale of duties, which, in a very able pamphlet, is shown to operate as a bounty to withhold sales until prices reach their maximum. "The gain of speculators is calculated not only on the *advance* in the price of corn, but also in the *fall* in the scale of duty; and as the duty falls in a greater ratio than the price of the corn rises, the duty operates as a bounty to withhold sales."\* When, for example, the average price in the home market is 66*s.*, the duty is 20*s.* 8*d.*, and on the prices reaching 73*s.* the duty is only 1*s.*; and the difference of profit to the importer is thus 7*s.* by the advance of prices, and 19*s.* 8*d.* by the fall of duty, making a total of 26*s.* 8*d.* The average duty paid on the 11,318,549 quarters of foreign wheat entered for home consumption since the present corn-law came into operation, to the 5th of January, 1841, was 5*s.* 8*d.* per quarter; but of the above quantity, 4,532,651 quarters were admitted in the fifteen months ending September, 1839, at a duty of 3*s.* 7*d.* only.

\*Mr. Salomons "On the Operation of the Present Scale of Duty on Foreign Corn."

## CHAPTER X.

## NINTH PERIOD.—MAY, 1841.

Lord John Russell's proposal for permanently fixed duties on imported corn, &c.—Review of the several measures of the British legislature on the subject—Productive industry and capabilities of England—The plan of the proposed alterations—Commercial relations at the peace, and the results of the erroneous policy—Representations of the Committee for Munich, Dresden, &c.—Comparative exports of cotton-stuffs to the north in 1820 and 1828—Considerations on the proposed scale of duties—Probable results—Memorandum from the department of the customs in England—Erroneous estimates of the cost of foreign corn—Extract from McCulloch on this point—Prices of the Prussian and English markets contrasted—Extract from Mr. Jacob's report on transportation of wheat to Odessa, Dantzic, &c.—Account of the consumption of wheat and flour, foreign and colonial, in the United Kingdom—Evidences of the prejudicial influence of the fluctuating scale of prices, &c. . . .

On the 7th of May Lord John Russell, as the organ of the government, announced his intention of moving, in a committee of the whole house, the following fixed duties on the importation of foreign corn :—

Wheat,	-	-	-	8s. 0d. per quarter.
Rye, peas, and beans,	-	-	-	5s. 0d.
Barley,	-	-	-	4s. 6d.
Oats,	-	-	-	3s. 4d.

A fixed permanent duty has not hitherto been adopted under any of the numerous acts for regulating the importation of foreign corn. Prior to 1436 there do not appear to have been any restrictions of a fiscal nature on the import trade in corn. The prosperity of the country at that period depended chiefly on its agriculture, and the object of the legislature was to promote the exportation of agricultural produce. The act of 1773 admitted wheat at a duty of 6*d.* the quarter when the average price in the home market was something above the cost of production. This is the most reasonable corn-

law which the country has yet had ; and prices in England and the opposite parts of the continent were about the same level. In the act of 1815 little regard was paid to the average cost of production ; supplies were excluded until the average price of wheat reached 80s. the quarter ; and an artificial stimulus was given to agriculture, which, in the end, proved highly injurious to those whose interests it was designed to favor, and who abandoned the act with as much good will as they had called for its enactment. Since the act of 1773 great changes have taken place in the occupations of the people of this country. England is no longer dependent on agriculture and the home trade alone. The home market is not sufficiently extensive to give full activity to the productive powers and industry of the country, and the markets of the world are necessary to insure our prosperity. Even if a portion of the population engaged in manufactures could, by any possibility, be annihilated and cut down to a proportion which would be fully employed in satisfying the domestic demand, the energies of that diminished portion would soon need a wider field for their unfettered exercise, and would require the removal of the artificial barriers which limited their powers and diminished their prosperity. But it is of course foolish to entertain the idea of cramping the industry of the country with the view of rendering it more prosperous. There the non-agricultural population is ; and to its skill, aided by the wondrous power of machinery, are we indebted for the luxuries which nature has bestowed upon other countries but denied to this, giving it instead unlimited mineral wealth, a fortunate geographical position, and a population whose admirable qualities have never been surpassed.

The proposed alteration in the import duties on corn and grain has been brought forward in connection with plans of fiscal reform, which, if carried, will lead to a complete revision of our commercial policy, with a view of placing our

relations with other countries on a more satisfactory foundation, and of enabling our manufacturers to preserve their footing in some of the principal markets of the world. The effect of the present competition is to reduce profits and wages to the same level, whether on the continent or in England, with this disadvantage to ourselves,—that the cost of food is artificially raised in this country. Had our commercial policy been placed on a proper basis at the peace, we should still have had customers where we have now rivals. But duties have been placed on British manufactures in retaliation of our attempt to exclude raw produce sent in payment for them. This is the argument with which our diplomatists are met at every foreign court, from Berlin to Cairo. Mr. McGregor, Secretary of the Board of Trade, related to the committee on the import duties the appeals which were made to him as the commercial representative of this country at Berlin, and at the two congresses held at Munich and Dresden ;—“ You compelled us” (they said) “ to become manufacturers ; we have not mines of gold and silver, and you will not take what we have to give you ; but if you had taken what we have to give, we should have continued to produce it ; but as you would not take it, our people were intelligent enough to turn their attention extensively to manufactures.” Dr. Bowring’s “ Report to Lord Palmerston on the Prussian Commercial Union” is to the same effect. “ We have rejected” (says he) “ the payments they have offered,—we have forced them to manufacture what they were unable to buy.” “ We should not have complained,” says a distinguished German writer, “ that all our markets were overflowing with English manufactures,—that Germany received, in British cotton goods alone, more than the hundred millions of British subjects in the East Indies,—had not England, while she was inundating us with *her* productions, insisted on closing her markets to *ours*. The English Corn-Law of 1815 had, in fact, excluded our corn from the ports of Great Britain :

she told us we were to buy, but not to sell. We were not willing to adopt reprisals; we vainly hoped that a sense of her own interest would lead to reciprocity. But we were disappointed, and we were compelled to take care of ourselves." With reference to the United States of America, Mr. Addington, the British Minister at Washington, in a despatch to Mr. Canning, said:—"I have only to add, that had no restrictions on the importation of foreign corn existed in Great Britain, the tariff would never have passed through either house of congress, since the agricultural states, and especially Pennsylvania would have been opposed to its enactment."

The reconsideration of our commercial system (in which the corn trade forms so important a part) would, sooner or later, have been forced upon us by the change which has for some time been going on in our foreign trade, and by the fact that the exports of our manufactured goods, in which "much labor" is employed, have been replaced by those of raw and partially manufactured materials, in which "little labor" is required. To Northern Europe we exported cotton manufactured goods to the value of 4,651,299*l.* in 1820, and, in 1838, our exports of the same goods only amounted to 1,607,990*l.*; but while the value of cotton twist (a half-manufactured article) exported to the same quarter, in 1820, was 1,961,554*l.*, it amounted to 5,378,455*l.* in 1838. The same kind of change has taken place in the other great branches of manufacture. It is stated that "the quantity of cotton twist exported, if made into goods in this country, would give employment to nearly double the number of hand-loom and double the number of power-loom weavers at present engaged in making cotton goods for exportation."\* But the necessity of the proposed revision was unequivocally demonstrated by the unsuccessful attempt in 1840 to increase the revenue by

\* Report of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce.

additional taxes. On the assessed taxes, which cannot be evaded, the increase was realized ; but on articles of daily consumption scarcely any additional revenue was obtained. The energies of the country were already too much depressed, and they had lost that elasticity which had carried it through so many difficulties. To restore its resources to their former vigor is the object of the proposed change in the corn-laws.

The duty proposed to be laid on wheat exceeds by 2*s.* 4*d.* the duty (5*s.* 8*d.*) actually paid under the existing law, and by 4*s.* 5*d.* the duty per quarter paid on the importation of 4½ million quarters in 1838-9. At the first glance it would appear that the proposed plan was therefore less favorable to the consumer than the sliding scale under which wheat may be admitted at a duty of 1*s.* only. But it is the operation of the two modes of charging the duty on *price* which is the real object for consideration. Under a fluctuating duty which has in one year (1838) changed thirty times from January to the end of November, and in other years since it was adopted has undergone alterations calculated to baffle the most clear-seeing speculator, there can be no steadiness of foreign imports. For example, in 1838 the duty in the second week of January was 34*s.* 8*d.*, and it declined gradually until September the 13th, when it reached the lowest point. Of course, during this period, prices were rising in the home market ; but instead of the foreign corn in bond being gradually admitted for consumption, there were only about 33,000 quarters entered from the beginning of the year up to the end of August, though the average price for that *month* was 74*s.* 8*d.* The speculators *waited* until the second week of September, when, by having withheld the supply, the duty became nominal, and in a single week 1,514,047 quarters of foreign wheat were thrown upon the markets. This *sudden* addition to the supply occasioned a decline of



prices, and the duty again rose. The progress of the duty in the short space of six weeks was as follows :—

			s.	d.
Week ending	Sept.	13th	.	1 0
"	"	20th	.	2 8
"	"	27th	.	10 8
"	Oct.	4th	.	16 8
"	"	11th	.	20 8
"	"	18th	.	21 8
"	"	25th	.	22 8

With what confidence could the merchant purchase supplies in the foreign markets under such a system? A cargo arriving at the end of September, instead of the middle of the month, would have been subject to a duty of 10s. 8d. instead of 1s. per quarter, and prices would have fallen lower than might have been calculated upon when the purchase was effected. It would then be bonded, and might remain in the warehouses until actually unfit for use. In a parliamentary paper (46, Session 1839) it is stated that 899 quarters of foreign wheat were abandoned and destroyed that year in the port of London. The circumstances under which this took place are explained in the following memorandum from the landing and warehousing department in the customs :—  
 “ This wheat had been in the custody of the Crown in the bonded warehouses of the port of London since its importation from Petersburg in 1831, and had become infested with weevil to such a degree as to be unfit for human food, and quite unsaleable. Under these circumstances, the owners, desirous of being relieved from further expense for granary rent, &c., upon an article which had become almost worthless, applied to the board of customs for permission to destroy it; and the board, on the report of their officers confirming the representations of the owners as to its damaged condition, granted their permission accordingly, which was carried into effect

on 25th November, 1837, by the grain being thrown into the river Thames."

Another defect of the fluctuating scale is to limit the radius of supply, which, instead of comprising the north and south-east of Europe, the Black Sea, Egypt, the United States, and other distant corn-growing countries, is confined chiefly to the markets of Hamburg, Dantzic, and the Baltic ports, to which buyers rush, and, by their competition within a narrow circle, raise the prices to an unnecessary height, relying upon the profits to be obtained under the fluctuating scale amply indemnifying them for the extra charges which the necessity of despatch and expedition occasions. Purchases are made with bills drawn on England; as the unsteadiness of the trade does not encourage that demand for our manufactures which would spring up to the advantage of both parties if it were less subject to impulsive starts. The derangement of monetary affairs is a necessary consequence of a trade conducted under these circumstances; and the value of merchandise of all kinds declines from sales being forced in order to meet engagements at a time when money has been rendered scarce by the drain of remittances for corn. Neither does the present sliding scale work beneficially for the farmer, since it renders prices unsteady. The farmer with large capital may derive advantage from it, as he can select his own time for the sale of his produce; he can act in tacit co-operation with the importer of foreign corn, and, taking advantage of the highest rise of prices, get it off his hands before the markets have been temporarily glutted with a foreign supply. In 1838 this influx of foreign grain took place just before the harvest, and the great majority of farmers had to dispose of their produce when the markets had been lowered from the large foreign supply admitted just when the produce of our own harvest was coming to market. Another disadvantage of the sliding scale is experienced in those years when the crops are of inferior quality. There

is an excessive scarcity of good wheat, but the quantity sold of an inferior quality depresses the average prices, and raises the duty so as to exclude a supply of sound wheat from abroad. In this case the holders of English wheat which happens to have been favorably harvested enjoy an exclusive monopoly of the market ; or, if it be disturbed, it is not until the price of the best wheat has risen so high as to enable the importer to pay a duty, probably exceeding 20s. per quarter, in addition to all other charges.

A very exaggerated notion prevails in this country respecting the prices of foreign corn in the principal markets from which we obtain a supply when our own crops are deficient. The average price of wheat in Dantzic during the ten years ending 1831 was 33s. 5d. per quarter, and during the twenty-two years ending with 1838 it was 34s. 4d. the quarter. It is to no purpose to refer to the prices in Volhynia or in Podolia, which are of course very low compared with prices in this country ; but the competition is not between the *growers* of England and those of Poland. The question is at what price wheat from these districts can be introduced into the English market, for the competition of the English grower is with the foreigner after *his* produce has been charged with all the costs of conveyance to the ports of shipment and with the profits of intermediate dealers both foreign and English. Mr. Porter, of the Board of Trade, says :—" The charges, in ordinary times, of merely transporting a quarter of wheat from the north of Germany and the lower ports of the Baltic to England, are stated, on good authority, to be 10s. 6d. in addition to all the charges of shipping ; and I am assured that in order to get back in London the cost of a quarter of wheat bought in the Dantzic market with the lowest rate of mercantile profit, it must be sold at an advance of 18s. upon the original cost."\* Another eminent authority estimates

\* "Effect of Restrictions on the Importation of Corn." By G. R. Porter.

the cost of importing wheat from Dantzic, warehousing it here, and keeping it six months till sold, including insurance, but without profit, at 18s. 3d. per quarter.\* Mr. McCulloch, in the appendix to a pamphlet published by him in May, 1841, gives an account of the charges on 100 quarters of wheat imported from Dantzic for sale on consignment in London, in May, 1841. This includes the expenses of its importation, its landing, its retention for three weeks, and its delivery to the buyer, which amount in the aggregate to 45l. 13s. 8d., and, with an allowance for waste, the cost would be raised 50l. One hundred quarters of fine high mixed wheat, weighing about 61 lbs. per bushel, "would cost, by the latest advices, 40s. per quarter, so that this parcel of wheat could not be sold at less than 50s. per quarter, and to this has to be added the profit of the importer, which at 10 per cent. would raise the price to 54s. the quarter; and a fixed duty of 8s. would further increase it to 62s. Wheat is always cheaper in Dantzic, quality considered, than in any of the continental ports nearer London; and Mr. McCulloch states that, whenever there is a demand from this country for 150,000 or 200,000 quarters, the price uniformly rises to 40s. the quarter; and in 1839, when 384,369 quarters of wheat were shipped at Dantzic for England, it cost the shippers 45s. to 55s. per quarter. If the ports of this country were always open, it may be concluded that the price of good wheat in Dantzic, in ordinary years, would not be under 45s. the quarter. "But taking it at the lowest limit, or 35s., and adding to it 10s. or 12s. for the freight and other charges attending its conveyance to England, and its sale to the consumer, it is obvious it could not be sold here, even if there were no duty, for less than from 45s. to 47s. a quarter;" and if it were charged with a fixed duty of 8s. its price would be raised to 53s. to 55s. a quarter. Now, during the ten

\* Mr. James Wilson.—Tract on Corn Laws.

years ending with 1840 the average price of wheat in England and Wales was 56s. 11½d. a quarter. In five of these years the price was above this average, and in the other five years the average price was 48s. 6½d. per quarter. Thus, since the law of 1815, which assumed the average remunerating price of wheat at something under 80s. per quarter, the question of "protection" has been considerably narrowed, and in abundant years in this country the importation of wheat could scarcely be profitable, while in years of scarcity the demand would raise prices abroad and check them here only in the degree in which they had risen beyond the ratio of the deficiency.\* In the ten years ending 1820 the average price of wheat in England was 86s. 3d. the quarter, and in the ten years following the average was 56s. 11½d., and yet the improvement in agriculture has been so great as to provide food for one third more population. Mr. Tooke says,† that during the three years (1834-5-6) when the price of wheat in this country was on an average under 45s., there was no apparent tendency to diminished or deteriorated cultivation.

The following table, showing the average prices of wheat in Prussia and in England, as stated in the Prussian Official Gazette and in the London Gazette, from 1828 to 1837, is a proof how fallacious are the fears of the corn-growers here as to the probability of their being "inundated" with Prussian wheat :—

\* From 1832 to 1835 the average yearly import of wheat was 125,200 quarters, the average price in the home market being 49s. 4d. In 1839 the crop was deficient to the extent of probably one fifth or one seventh; the importations of wheat amounted to 2,681,390 quarters; and the average price of the period was 70s. 8d., or nearly double the price of the four years ending 1835.

† Hist. of Prices, iii. p. 50.

	Average Prices in Prussia Proper, including Dantzic and Königsberg.	Average Prices per London Gazette.	Difference between English Prices and mean of Prussian Prices.	Foreign Wheat and Flour consumed in Great Britain.
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	Quarters.
1828	27 2	60 5	32 5	842,050
1829	32 3	66 3	32 7	1,364,220
1830	29 6	64 3	32 6	1,701,885
1831	39 6	66 4	27 1	1,491,631
1832	34 0	58 8	24 11	325,435
1833	25 0	52 11	28 8	82,346
1834	23 9	46 2	21 10	64,653
1835	23 0	39 4	15 10	28,483
1836	21 0	48 6	26 6	30,046
1837	22 6	56 10	32 7	244,085

With a difference between the Prussian and English prices in 1829-30-31 varying from 27*s.* 1*d.* to 32*s.* 7*d.*, the quantities of wheat brought from all the ports of Prussia were only 353,906 quarters in 1829; 517,844 quarters in 1830; and 298,605 quarters in 1831. Prices were higher in England in 1839 than in 1838, and yet the imports from Prussia were above an eighth less than in the previous year.

When the corn-growers of England are told of wheat selling in Poland at 14*s.* or 15*s.* the quarter, they would do well to consider the cost of bringing it to the English market. The quantity which arrives at Dantzic to supply any urgent demand is brought from provinces at a distance of from 500 to 700 miles inland; and Mr. McCulloch states that in November, 1838, when wheat sold in Dantzic for 41*s.* 6*d.* a quarter, it was selling in Lemberg, the principal corn-market of Galicia, for 15*s.*—the difference, amounting to 26*s.* 6*d.*, being the measure of the cost and risk of conveyance from Lemberg to Dantzic.

The following account, taken from Mr. Jacob's First Report on the Corn Trade, succinctly describes the operations attending the transport of wheat from the interior to Dantzic.

"There are," says Mr. Jacob, "two modes of conveying

wheat to Dantzic by the Vistula. That which grows near the lower parts of the river, comprehending Polish Russia, and part of the province of Plock, and of Masovia, in the kingdom of Poland, which is generally of an inferior quality, is conveyed in covered boats, with shifting boards that protect the cargo from the rain, but not from pilfering. These vessels are long, and draw about fifteen inches water, and bring about 150 quarters of wheat. They are not, however, so well calculated for the upper parts of the river. From Cracow, where the Vistula first becomes navigable, to below the junction of the Bug with that stream, the wheat is mostly conveyed to Dantzic in open flats. These are constructed on the banks, in seasons of leisure, on spots far from the ordinary reach of the water, but which, when the rains of autumn, or the melted snow of the Carpathian mountains in the spring, fill and overflow the river, are easily floated. Barges of this description are about 75 feet long and 20 broad, with a depth of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet. They are made of fir, rudely put together, fastened with wooden treenails, the corners dovetailed and secured with slight iron clamps—the only iron employed in their construction. A large tree, the length of the vessel, runs along the bottom, to which the timbers are secured. This roughly-cut keelson rises nine or ten inches from the floor, and hurdles are laid on it which extend to the sides. They are covered with mats made of rye straw, and serve the purpose of drainage, leaving below a space in which the water that leaks through the sides and bottom is received. The bulk is kept from the sides and ends of the barge by a similar plan. The water which these ill constructed and imperfectly-caulked vessels receive is dipped out at the end and sides of the bulk of wheat. Vessels of this description draw from ten to twelve inches water, and yet they frequently get aground in descending the river. The cargoes usually consist of from 180 to 200 quarters of wheat. The wheat is thrown on the mats, piled as high as

the gunwale, and left uncovered, exposed to all the inclemencies of the weather and to the pilfering of the crew. During the passage the barge is carried along by the force of the stream, oars being merely used at the head and stern to steer clear of the sand-banks, which are numerous and shifting, and to direct the vessel in passing under the several bridges. These vessels are conducted by six or seven men. A small boat precedes, with a man in it, who is employed sounding, in order to avoid the shifting shoals. This mode of navigation is necessarily very slow; and during the progress of it, which lasts several weeks, and even months, the rain, if any fall, soon causes the wheat to grow, and the vessel assumes the appearance of a floating meadow. The shooting of the fibres soon forms a thick mat, and prevents the rain from penetrating more than an inch or two. The bulk is protected by this kind of covering, and when that is thrown aside is found in tolerable condition. The vessels are broken up at Dantzic, and usually sell for about two thirds of their original cost. The men who conduct them return on foot.

“When the cargo arrives at Dantzic or Elbing, all but the grown surface is thrown on the land, exposed to the sun, and frequently turned over, till any slight moisture it may have imbibed is dried. If a shower of rain falls, as well as during the night, the heaps of wheat on shore are thrown together in the form of a steep roof of a house, that the rain may run off, and are covered with a linen cloth. It is thus frequently a long time after the wheat has reached Dantzic before it is fit to be placed in the warehouses.”

The corn-growing districts in the south-east of Europe, and in the countries bordering the Black Sea, export their produce by the Don, the Dniepr, the Dniestr, and the Danube, or by land-carriage to Odessa for shipment to foreign countries, and that port stands in the same relation to the south of Europe as Dantzic does to the northern part. The prin-



incipal supply is however brought to the town in carts drawn by oxen, from distances varying from 100 to 400 miles. On an average of the seven years ending 1840 the quantity brought to Odessa amounted to only 17,760 quarters annually. During 1838-9-40 the average price of the best Odessa wheat was 34s. 6d. The voyage to England is long, and there is great risk of the grain heating; the expenses of importation amount to 15s. or 16s. and even 20s. a quarter; and it could not be sold so low as Dantzic wheat, which is far superior to the former in quality. The corn-grower of Wallachia, Bulgaria, or Bessarabia, though he sells his wheat, at 14s. or 15s. the quarter, cannot compete with the English grower who charges upwards of 50s. Mr. Jacob's account of the manner in which corn is transported to Odessa shows the physical impossibility of this competition becoming a matter of anxiety to the most timid agriculturist. He says: "The small wagons with wheat begin to arrive at Odessa in the month of May, but the greater portion of them do not reach that place till June or July. Some days in the two latter months present the curious spectacle of five or six hundred, and occasionally of even a thousand, of these vehicles entering the city. Each of the wagons, drawn by two oxen, carries about four quarters;\* so that in the year 1817, when the trade was the most extensive, there must have arrived, supposing three fourths of the corn to have been brought by land-carriage, about 160,000 of these vehicles in the six months from May to October. In a country where the labor of man and of cattle, and the prices of the bare necessities of life, are very cheap, this land-carriage maintains its due proportion of low rate.

\* It has been recently ascertained that each of the wagons conveys eight sacks of wheat, the sack containing a Polish horse, equal to three bushels and one peck, Winchester measure. The load of two oxen is thus three quarters and two bushels, instead of four quarters, as here calculated. The cost of conveyance, therefore, will amount to about one fifth more than appears by the extract.

Two oxen cannot travel over such rugged hills and deep sands as are to be found between the corn-growing districts and Odessa, when drawing a ton weight, at a greater rate than ten English miles per day. Each hundred miles will thus require ten days' work for two oxen and one man to proceed to the port, and about seven days to discharge the loading and to return with the empty carriage. The rate of hire for a man and two oxen is, at least in Podolia, 6*d.* per day. Where pasture is abundant the oxen may be fed for a mere trifle; but in the journey of near 100 miles across the steppes, in the months when the greater number of carriages pass over it, the vegetation is wholly burnt up, which, with the scarcity of water, must cause some expense in the maintenance of the cattle. If for their food and water an allowance be made of 1*s.* 6*d.* for the seventeen days, and it be added to the hire of the man and the oxen, it will make the cost of conveyance for the four quarters of wheat amount to 2*s.* 6*d.* per quarter for each hundred miles." The labor of many years, and the outlay of capital which has yet to be created, will be required before these difficulties will be overcome, and the cost of transport diminished by good roads and other facilities.

The following table shows the countries which are capable of furnishing us with wheat, and the quantities which they supplied us during three successive years of high prices.

AN ACCOUNT of the Quantities of Foreign and Colonial Wheat and Wheat-Flour brought into Consumption in the United Kingdom; stating the Quantities Imported from each Country during each Year from 1837 to 1839.

COUNTRIES FROM WHICH IMPORTED.	1837.	1838.	1839.
	Qrs.	Qrs.	Qrs.
Russia.....	3,903	141,656	356,164
Sweden and Norway.....	252	358	567
Denmark.....	7,444	147,728	202,927
Prussia .....	148,077	839,513	704,992
Germany :—			
Mecklenburg .....	36,498	147,383	104,777
Hanover.....	125	24,359	19,185
Oldenburg and Kniphausen.....	...	15,201	16,698
Hanse Towns.....	10,637	204,563	267,183
Holland .....	2,222	82,737	117,677
Belgium.....	153	18,284	24,516
France.....	202	65,012	309,897
Portugal, Madeira, and the Azores.....	...	...	28,800
Spain and the Canaries.....	2	1,279	9,010
Gibraltar.....	...	...	4,753
Italy.....	1,011	55,735	333,313
Malta.....	...	14,956	17,211
Ionian Islands.....	...	5,391	13,583
Turkey and Egypt.....	258	5,515	45,483
Morocco.....	...	...	3,358
Cape of Good Hope.....	...	520	3
East India Company's Territories.....	7,516	9,649	5,015
N. S. Wales & Van Diemen's Land...	117	4	...
British North American Colonies.....	25,745	19,597	7,764
United States of America.....	112	27,047	87,528
Isles of Guernsey, Jersey, Alderney, } and Man (Foreign Produce)..... }	1	21,906	30,383
All other parts.....	...	84	929
Total.....	244,275	1,848,477	2,711,725

It will be seen from this table that the importations from the United States, British North America, and other distant corn-growing countries, are quite insignificant, under the uncertainties of a fluctuating duty. The risks of the trade are so great as to present few inducements to the merchant; and when purchases of corn are made to supply our wants, it is not the surplus stock raised for the English market that

we obtain, but we enter into competition with the foreign consumer, and our necessities compel us to out-bid him in his own market. If the trade were always open, England would become, as Holland was in the seventeenth century, the great entrepôt of the corn-producing countries throughout the world: large purchases would be made in abundant years, and ourselves as well as other European countries would be supplied by our merchants in years of scarcity. Sir Walter Raleigh remarked that "a dearth of only one year in any part of Europe enriches Holland for seven years;" and there can be no doubt that a new and very important branch of commerce would spring up if England attracted to its ports the surplus produce of grain in the different parts of the world.

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE CORN TRADE FROM 1838 TO 1841.\*

THE admission of foreign corn and grain for home consumption takes place under a scale of duties which fluctuates with the aggregate prices taken in one hundred and fifty market towns, situated in different parts of the country. When the price of wheat in these towns is 66*s.* on an average of six weeks, the duty is 20*s.* 8*d.* per quarter, and for every shilling which the price falls, the duty advances one shilling; but when the average price is higher than 65*s.*, a different application of the sliding scale takes place, and the duty moves more rapidly to a lower point. At 67*s.* the duty falls 2*s.*, that is, to 18*s.* 8*d.*; at 68*s.* it is 16*s.* 8*d.*; at 69*s.* it is 13*s.* 8*d.*; and at 70*s.* it again descends 3*s.*, to 10*s.* 8*d.*; at 71*s.* it is 6*s.* 8*d.*; at 72*s.* another fall of 4*s.* takes place, and the duty is 2*s.* 8*d.*; and at 73*s.* it sinks to the lowest point, being only 1*s.* per quarter. Thus, while prices advance from 66*s.* to 73*s.*, being a rise of 7*s.*, the duty falls from 20*s.* 8*d.* to 1*s.*, being a decline of 19*s.* 8*d.*

The one hundred and fifty towns in which the average prices are taken for regulating the admission of foreign corn are intended as a fair medium for representing the general average wants of the country, and may be divided into several classes:—1. Towns in which large transactions of a

---

\* This chapter is derived chiefly from the Companion to the British Almanac for 1842.

speculative nature take place, as London, Liverpool, Hull, Newcastle, and other ports in which foreign corn is bonded. 2. Seats of manufacturing industry, which draw their supplies from a considerable distance, as Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, &c. 3. Towns of interchange, such as Wakefield, which serve as an emporium for the agricultural and manufacturing parts of the adjacent districts. 4. Market towns situated in a purely agricultural district, where the sales are made in every instance by the producer, and not, as in three other classes of towns, chiefly by factors. The produce of each district sells eventually for the same price in the last market which it reaches before consumption, but the greater cost of bringing it there necessarily reduces the price to a lower point in those markets which are distant than in those which are close at hand. In the centre of Lincolnshire, for example, prices will necessarily be lower than in the agricultural parts of the West Riding of Yorkshire, which adjoin the clothing districts, for whose consumption their respective produce is ultimately destined. The agricultural market towns may therefore be subdivided into two or three classes, as those which are more or less near a mass of non-agricultural consumers, also into those which are situated in a rich and fertile district, or one in which the production of grain is limited.

It is evident that by altering the proportions of these different classes of towns the stringency of the scale of duties may either be increased or diminished, that is, the advance of prices to the point when the lowest duty is chargeable may be either accelerated or retarded. If some of the largest grain markets in Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridge, and Lincolnshire were struck out of the list, the preponderating influence of London, Liverpool, Hull, Wakefield, and other markets where the supplies of grain are brought from a distance and pass through several hands, would raise the

averages and lower the duty; and if these latter places were struck out, the effect would be exactly reversed. As the average prices are determined by adding together the total quantities of each sort of corn sold in the one hundred and fifty towns, next the total prices, and then dividing the total amount of such prices by the total quantity of corn sold, it follows that those markets in which the largest quantities are sold have the greatest effect upon the general averages of the kingdom. In the week ending 10th September, 1841, when the duty was brought down to 1s., the quantity sold in the London market was 12,301 quarters, at an average of 76s. 9d., or more than one-sixth of the whole quantity returned. Above one half (36,849 quarters) of the total number of quarters sold were returned from the following places:—

	Quarters.	s.	d.
London . . . . .	12,301	76	9
Wakefield . . . . .	8,662	74	2
Leeds . . . . .	6,741	73	8
Hull . . . . .	3,604	75	6
Liverpool . . . . .	2,196	71	5
Newcastle . . . . .	1,889	76	2
Derby . . . . .	1,456	74	11

The average prices of the above seven places were 75s. 0¼d. the quarter, the remaining 36,066 quarters sold at the one hundred and forty-three other towns averaged 67s. 3¾d. the quarter, and the general average for the whole of England and Wales was 71s. 2d. At Huntingdon, Wisbeach, Boston, and Cambridge, where 3,859 quarters of wheat were sold, the average prices varied from 61s. 5d. to 62s. Thus the same scale of duties may be made to operate very differently, by adding to the number of agricultural markets, or striking out some of those in the manufacturing districts or in the mining counties of Cornwall and Durham. The geographical position of the one hundred and fifty towns making returns has also its influence. Eighty-three of

these towns are situated south of the line drawn from the Severn to the Wash; forty are between this line and one drawn from the Humber to the Mersey; and thirty-seven towns are situated north of these two rivers. The earlier harvest of the southern and midland counties produces an effect upon the averages before any of the new supplies reach the markets situated in the northern portion of the kingdom. The time when the duty reached the lowest point which it attained in the last four years was September 13th, 1838; September 5th, 1839; September 3d, 1840; and September 10th, 1841; which is just before the arrival of new wheat of English growth has become sufficiently large to depress prices materially, and the corn-growers of the southern and eastern counties, which have easy access to the London market, obtain the advantage of the highest range of prices; but before the farmers of the northern counties have threshed out any portion of their crops, the foreign wheat in bond has been liberated, and the farmers' supply of new wheat does not reach the markets until after the depression of prices occasioned by the sudden influx of foreign wheat.

Under the present arrangement the high prices of the large towns are balanced by the lower prices of the agricultural districts, and though the averages in the former may be so high as to reach beyond the point when foreign corn is admissible at a duty of 1s. the quarter, yet, until the scarcity extends to the remotest parts of the country, and the general averages are raised, this foreign supply is kept out of the home market. In years of scarcity the field of supply from which such a town as Leeds obtains bread-corn is considerably extended, and part of the high price is occasioned by the additional cost of transport. As prices rise, the most distant markets are resorted to, and then, the averages of the whole kingdom being sufficiently raised by the



intenseness of the demand, the duty falls, and foreign supplies are admitted for home consumption. At one period during the present century England was divided into twelve maritime districts, in any of which importation might take place, while in the adjoining district it was prohibited, each district being regulated by its own averages. The object of this arrangement was to afford facilities for supplying the wants of distinct sections of the country, and to prevent their suffering unnecessarily from high prices. It was introduced at a time when the means of inland transport were less perfect than now, and before the system of "protection" had taken such deep root.

It has been proposed to strike out from the list of towns which make returns, such places as London, Liverpool, Newcastle, Hull, &c., on the ground that in those markets fictitious sales are made by parties interested in getting foreign corn out of bond at the lowest rate of duty; and that the speculation which takes place in the corn trade is nearly all carried on at these ports. To what extent fictitious sales are made with the object alleged it is impossible to say, but the fluctuating scale offers the greatest temptation to such a practice. Supposing there are 800,000 quarters of wheat under bond in the ports of London, Liverpool, Hull, Newcastle, and two or three other places, and the average price is 66s., the duty is accordingly 20s. 8d., which on 800,000 quarters would amount to 826,000l. If the average price can be raised only 7s. higher per quarter, the duty would only amount to 40,000l., making a difference to the holders of upwards of 1,000,000l., namely 786,000l. by the fall in the duty, and 280,000l. by the advance of prices. The construction of the present sliding scale is eminently calculated to encourage fraud by the large gains which it places in the hands of speculators in foreign corn. Up to 66s. the duty only decreases 1s. for

every shilling increase in price ; but from 66*s.* to 68*s.* the fall of duty is 2*s.* ; from 68*s.* to 70*s.* the duty declines 3*s.* for each shilling that the average prices advance ; from 71*s.* to 72*s.* the duty falls 4*s.* for each shilling that the price advances. Thus at this stage an advance of a single shilling gives the holder of foreign wheat an additional profit of 5*s.* per quarter, of which 4*s.* consists in the fall of the duty.

A comparison of the returns made by the corn dealers in the London market at corresponding periods of two different years, in one of which the ports were already open at the low duty, and in the other when prices were advancing preparatory to that event, shows that the transactions of the two periods were on a very different scale ; though it must be remarked that just after a large supply had been thrown on the market it was to be expected that there would not be so great a demand as when prices were advancing and the demand was greater than the supply. A parliamentary paper (383, Sess. 1841) shows that in the six weeks ending 27th Aug. 1830, only 21,630 quarters were returned as being sold in the London market during the whole of this period ; but in the corresponding period of 1840, when the duty was sinking to the lowest point which it attained during the year, the returns of wheat sold in the six weeks amounted to 89,448 quarters. In the former period the difference between the average price of the London market and that of all the other markets in England and Wales was never higher than 2*s.* 1*d.* nor lower than 9*d.*, but in the latter period the difference was never less than 6*s.* 8*d.*, and was as high as 8*s.* 6*d.* The following table will show the effect which the London market had on the average prices by which the duty is regulated :—

Weeks ended.	LONDON MARKET.		KINGDOM.		Six Weeks Average of the Kingdom, exclusive of the London Market.	Actual Weekly Duty including the London Market.	Duty which would have been paid, exclusive of the London Market.
	Number of Quar.	Average Price.	Average Price.				
		s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
24 July	11,235	79 4	71 4	70 1	6 8	10 8	
31 . .	14,960	80 5	71 11	70 6	6 8	10 8	
7 Aug.	19,500	80 2	72 10	71 2	2 8	6 8	
14 . .	12,613	78 5	72 4	71 3	2 8	6 8	
21 . .	15,703	78 10	72 7	71 8	2 8	6 8	
28 . .	15,437	79 6	72 4	70 10	2 8	6 8	

It will be seen from the above table that, if the London averages had been struck out, the duty on importation would have been 4s. the quarter higher. In 1841, in the week when the duty was brought to the lowest point, there were 12,301 quarters returned as sold in the London market at 76s. 9d., but in the week after this had been accomplished only 4,675 quarters were returned, and the average price was 65s. 10d. In the first of these weeks one half the quantity returned from the whole kingdom was represented to have been sold in London and six other towns, but the returns for the following week showed that considerably less than one third of the former quantity was sold in these seven places. If fictitious sales are made with the object of reaching the lowest rate of duty, the effect of such an operation is to diminish the stringency of the sliding scale, for, while the average price is represented to be 73s., and the duty 1s., the price would be considerably lower if the London average were excluded, and the duty would of course be higher. If the alleged returns of fictitious sales could be effectually suppressed, the effect even of a lower scale would be precisely the same as a higher scale worked by dealers desirous of forcing down the duties. If the scale should be left as it now stands, and all tampering with the

returns could be prevented, the stringency of the law would be greatly increased, as fictitious sales have, it is believed, always attended its operation.

The fluctuating scale was preceded by a system under which no importation was allowed to take place until prices reached a certain height, which by the Act of 1815 was fixed at 80s., when the ports were opened and foreign wheat was admitted without payment of any duty. In the Act of 1822 (which never came into operation) the price when importation was allowed was reduced to 70s., but the following scale of duties accompanied this pretended relaxation of the law : namely, 12s. per quarter, with 5s. additional for the first three months of the ports being open ; and if prices rose above 70s., and were under 80s., the duty was to be lowered to 5s., with the addition of 5s. for the first three months after the alteration ; and above 80s. the duty was fixed at 1s. The present sliding scale, it was contended, was a great improvement of the Acts of 1815 and 1822, as under it importation might take place at any time on payment of the current rate of duty. The following table shows the quantities of foreign wheat admitted at different rates of duty from the passing of the Act to the 5th January, 1841.

Quantities of wheat and wheat flour entered for home consumption from the passing of the Act 9 Geo. IV. c. 60. (15th July, 1828 to 5th January, 1841):—

Rates of Duty.			Wheat.	Wheat Flour.	Rates of Duty.			Wheat.	Wheat Flour.
s.	d.		Qrs.	Cwts.	s.	d.		Qrs.	Cwts.
1	0	per Qr.	3,907,981	1,276,731	40	8	per Qr.	3	..
2	8	"	2,788,277	835,406	42	8	"	7	3
6	8	"	1,994,102	518,897	43	8	"	4	7
10	8	"	783,280	232,592	44	8	"	16	13
13	8	"	548,348	466,432	45	8	"	62	33
16	8	"	298,677	213,707	46	8	"	10	155
18	8	"	76,200	44,788	47	8	"	7	17
20	8	"	377,667	96,538	48	8	"	3	2
21	8	"	107,006	5,861	49	8	"	2	36
22	8	"	13,664	5,940	50	8	"	8	56
23	8	"	138,775	56,580	Admitted at an ad valo- rem Duty, being damd. Duty free, do. Duty free, for Seed - -				
24	8	"	37,329	2,070					
25	8	"	27,153	1,555					
26	8	"	4,724	654				2,629	..
27	8	"	1,882	690				..	350
28	8	"	134,275	1,377					
29	8	"	61,649	101				71	..
30	8	"	13,955	756					
31	8	"	1,496	87	Total -			11,322,085	3,768,335
32	8	"	432	63					
33	8	"	908	511	Colonial.				
34	8	"	385	164					
35	8	"	154	24					
36	8	"	326	42	s.	d.			
37	8	"	314	24	0	6	per Qr.	129,858	426,809
38	8	"	154	72	5	0	"	393,407	596,996
39	8	"	151	51	Total -			523,265	1,023,805

From this table it appears that, out of 11,322,085 quarters of wheat imported in the course of twelve years and a half, nearly nine millions and a half were admitted when the prices were above 70s. the quarter, or above eighty quarters out of every hundred, the whole quantity admitted when the prices were below 70s. being 1,848,445 quarters. If importation had been entirely prohibited when prices in the home market were under 70s., the effect would have been very little different from that which has taken place under a system which at all times nominally permits importation.

At the end of August, 1838, there were 919,855 quarters

of wheat in bond, but, although the weekly average price was 74*s.* 5*d.* the quarter, only 4,930 quarters were entered for home consumption. The six weeks' averages for the last week in August were 72*s.* 11*d.*, and consequently only one penny under the rate at which the duty would be at 1*s.*; but, instead of the holders of bonded corn liberating their stock at the current duty, which was then 2*s.* 8*d.*, they withheld it for another week, when it fell to 1*s.*, and 1,261,894 quarters were then taken out of bond. In the second week in September the duty again rose to 2*s.* 8*d.*, and before the end of the month was 16*s.* 8*d.* In 1839 the same thing took place. In August the average price for the month being 71*s.* 8*d.*, the entries of foreign wheat for home consumption were only 4,268 quarters, though the stock in bond at the end of the month was 384,984 quarters. In September the duty descended to 6*s.* 8*d.*, being the lowest point for that year, and 812,738 quarters were admitted. Again, in 1840, the stock of bonded wheat at the end of July was 787,105 quarters, and although the average price for the *month* was 69*s.* 9*d.*, only 25,611 quarters were entered for home consumption; but in the first week of September 1,217,860 quarters were entered, the duty having fallen from 16*s.* 8*d.* to 2*s.* 8*d.* In 1841 supplies were in like manner withheld until the duty reached the lowest point, at which it remained for one week, when the whole quantity in bond was liberated. The rapid manner in which the duty falls after the six weeks' averages exceed 70*s.* gives such large profits to those who hold bonded stock, that no surprise can exist as to its operation in causing supplies to be withheld.

At the period when importation was entirely prohibited unless prices rose above 80*s.*, and by the Act of 1822 above 70*s.*, there was less necessity than under the present system for hurrying into the foreign market with breathless haste

and buying at enormous prices in order to catch the market at the proper point. Previous to 1815, the six weeks' averages for regulating importation were only struck four times a year, and the ports, being once opened, continued so for at least three months, and could not be closed, even though prices declined, until the next quarterly averages were struck. In 1815, this arrangement was still adopted, though with some modification ; for if, within six weeks after the quarterly averages had been struck which opened the ports, prices should decline below 80*s.*, (the free importation price,) supplies were excluded from ports situated between the river Eyder in Denmark, and the Bidassoa in Spain. But distant markets could be resorted to with more confidence than under the present scale.

In one year (1838) the duty underwent thirty-five variations. On the 19th of July it was 20*s.* 8*d.*, on September 13th 1*s.*, and on October 11th again 20*s.* 8*d.* Now, under the Acts of 1815 and 1822, the duty would have remained fixed for three months after prices had reached the importation price ; but in 1838 it was only for a single week at 1*s.*, rising each successive week from 1*s.* to 2*s.* 8*d.*, 10*s.* 8*d.*, 16*s.* 8*d.*, 20*s.* 8*d.*, 21*s.* 8*d.*, until, on October 25th, it was 22*s.* 8*d.* Before the middle of December, in the same year, it again descended to 1*s.* ; but at this season of the year, with the ports of the Baltic closed, the quantity brought into consumption was too small to effect much reduction in the price, and the duty remained at 1*s.* until March 22d, 1839. In 1840 the lowest duty was 2*s.* 8*d.*, but it only continued at that rate for one week, and five weeks afterwards it was at 20*s.* 8*d.* In 1841 the duty was again 1*s.* only for a single week, namely, for the week ending September 17th ; on the following successive weeks it advanced to 2*s.* 8*d.*, 10*s.* 8*d.*, 16*s.* 8*d.*, 20*s.* 8*d.*, and on the 15th of October was 22*s.* 8*d.* If persons engaged in the corn trade

endeavor to ascertain the productiveness of foreign harvests and the defects of our own, and from the superabundance of the former, attempt to supply the deficiency of the latter, they must be indemnified by large profits for the risks which attend an uncertain market. If the competition of buyers in the adjacent continental markets deter them, and foreseeing the scarcity, they give orders to their correspondents in the United States of America to ship flour for England, it may be found that a difference of a fortnight in point of time has excluded the supply from this distant source entirely from the English market, and it must either be bonded at a considerable cost, or the importer must wait an indefinite time for its release, or ship his cargo elsewhere. On the 1st of March, 1831, the duty was 1s., and it never reached the same point again until September, 1838; and from July, 1831, to 19th July, 1838, it was never below 20s. 8d. During the whole of these seven years there were constantly from 600,000 to 900,000 quarters of foreign wheat in the bonded warehouses waiting until the market became profitable. It cannot be doubted that the country is supplied under this arrangement at the dearest possible rate, and in such a manner as almost to render it totally impracticable for that interchange of commodities to take place which would ensue under a steadier system. If the demand for foreign wheat were only temporary, and sprung up only in seasons of extraordinary scarcity, there might be some ground for leaving the trade in its present unsatisfactory state; but it is now clear that, except in a *succession* of abundant years, we must resort to other countries, and advantage should be taken of this necessity to create a demand for our manufactures, which can never grow out of the present manner in which we enter foreign markets as purchasers of their agricultural produce. The following abstract from a parliamentary return, showing the annual average importation of foreign and colonial



wheat in each consecutive period of ten years, from 1760 to 1840, is a proof of the increasing dependence of this country upon other parts of the world :—

Years.	Average Annual Importation.
1761—70 . . . . .	94,089 <i>Qrs.</i>
1771—80 . . . . .	111,372
1781—90 . . . . .	143,292
1791—00 . . . . .	470,342
1801—10 . . . . .	555,959
1811—20 . . . . .	429,076
1821—30 . . . . .	534,762
1831—40 . . . . .	908,118

Thus, it is clear that we must enter the foreign market, and the question is whether we shall do so on terms advantageous or disadvantageous to ourselves. But whenever we become extensive purchasers of foreign corn, the uncertainties of the fluctuating scale compel us to resort chiefly to the nearest ports instead of the general markets of the world, and competition being confined, we can only obtain supplies at excessively high prices. The following abstract of a parliamentary return shows the quantity of wheat imported in four different years from the countries from which we derive the largest supply.

In 1835 only a small supply was required, and in two of the other years we bought up as large a stock as could possibly be spared :—

	Quantities of Wheat Imported into Great Britain from			Total import from the three Countries.	Average Prices of Wheat in Great Britain per Quarter.	
	Prussia.	Germany.	Holland.			
	<i>Qrs.</i>	<i>Qrs.</i>	<i>Qrs.</i>	<i>Qrs.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
1835	13,891	13,062	8	26,961	39	4
1838	547,325	309,458	82,011	938,794	64	7
1839	729,677	403,515	115,595	1,248,787	70	8
1840	769,792	352,959	44,147	1,166,898	66	4

The effect of this unsteadiness of demand in a *limited* market is shown in the following table of the lowest and highest prices in the most important corn markets of the Continent, and is also abstracted from a parliamentary return, (No. 177, Sess. 1840 :) in 1831 we were large purchasers, and in 1835 we did not require a foreign supply.

	England.				Danzig.				Hamburg.				Amsterdam.			
	Lowest.		Highest.		Lowest.		Highest.		Lowest.		Highest.		Lowest.		Highest.	
	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.
1831	59	2	75	1	40	2	49	6	34	9	52	2	37	8	46	8
1835	36	0	44	0	20	1	24	11	20	9	22	3	21	10	26	0

  

	Rotterdam.				Memel.				Odessa.			
	Lowest.		Highest.		Lowest.		Highest.		Lowest.		Highest.	
	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.
1831	48	11	60	9	31	4	49	3	19	10	33	0
1835	26	0	31	6	19	4	26	0	16	2	23	0

In 1838, after we had for several years nearly ceased resorting to the continental markets, we again became extensive purchasers. Before this necessity was fully apparent, the price of wheat at Danzig was as low as 24s. 1d. the quarter, but in the course of the year prices advanced to 61s. 2d., being a rise of 154 per cent., occasioned by the demand from England. At Amsterdam, in the same year, prices rose 131 per cent., namely, from 27s. 2d. the quarter to 63s. ; at Hamburg prices advanced 114 per cent., from 27s. 3d. to 58s. 6d. the quarter.

It seems impossible to avoid the following conclusions as to the effect of the present regulations on the foreign corn-trade:—1. That, though nominally importation may take

place at any time, the manner in which the scale of duties is arranged acts as a bonus on the withholding of foreign corn until prices reach the highest rate, and the duty sinks to the lowest point; and wheat, instead of being sold at an average mercantile profit, becomes an article of competition and speculation, in order to realize large profits by the fall of the duty. 2. That, when the duty falls to the lowest point, and not until then, a large supply of bonded corn is suddenly brought into the market, and unsteadiness and violent fluctuations of price are the consequence. 3. That the radius of supply is limited; and competition being confined to the nearest ports, purchases are made at extravagant rates. 4. That the exchange of manufactured goods for agricultural produce is not encouraged, and, extensive payments being made in gold, the currency is injuriously affected. 5. That under a fixed duty most of these evils would be either diminished or altogether avoided; the whole world would be opened to purchasers of foreign corn; and the present bonus on withholding supplies being withdrawn, prices would not reach an excessive height, and a fixed duty of several shillings might, under these circumstances, be collected with less injury to the consumer than a duty of one shilling under the present system.

---

A document was presented to both houses of parliament in the first session of 1841, containing communications from our Consuls residing at St. Petersburg, Riga, Liebau, Odessa, Warsaw, Stockholm, Danzig, Königsberg, Stettin, Memel, Elsinore, Hamburg, Rotterdam, Antwerp, and Palermo, respecting the production of corn and grain and the trade in these articles in their respective districts. They are in reply to queries addressed to each Consul in June, 1840, by direction of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

1. "What quantity of grain, of each kind, could be exported to England, from the country or district in which you reside, if the trade in corn in England were made constantly open, at a moderate duty?"

The following table is a summary of the answers received, but it is necessary to remark that the Consuls at St. Petersburg, Liebau, and Hamburg, state the gross amount that could be exported to all countries, and not the quantity which might be shipped to England. The mean quantity is generally given throughout the table:—

	Wheat.	Rye.	Barley.	Oats.
	<i>Qrs.</i>	<i>Qrs.</i>	<i>Qrs.</i>	<i>Qrs.</i>
St. Petersburg	192,500	122,500	47,000	245,000
Riga . . . .	Quantity	not stated.		
Liebau . . . .	30,000	170,000	200,000	60,000
Odessa . . . .	150,000	Quantity	not stated.	
Warsaw . . . .	300,000	230,000	17,400	17,490
Stockholm . . .	1,000	2,000	10,000	12,000
Danzig . . . .	315,000	105,000	42,000	10,500
Königsberg . . .	65,000	100,000	20,000	40,000
Stettin . . . .	250,000	40,000	30,000	20,000
Memel . . . .	5,964	45,759	15,466½	20,024½
Elsinore . . . .	175,000	..	275,000	225,000
Hamburg . . . .	538,000	97,000	195,700	158,700
Rotterdam . . .	Quantity	not stated.		
Antwerp . . . .	Quantity	not stated.		
Palermo . . . .	200,000	..	..	..
Total . . . .	2,222,464	912,259	852,566½	808,714½

We subjoin a few notes to render the table more intelligible:—

STOCKHOLM.—The whole of Sweden could export 125,000 quarters of all sorts of grain in average years, but the crops vary in quantity and quality more than in any part of Europe, and there are, on an average, two abundant, three ordinary, and one deficient harvest in every six years. The exports are chiefly to Norway.

ST. PETERSBURG.—In the five years ending 1839, the quantities of corn and grain exported, averaged annually 21,000 quarters of wheat, 18,000 quarters of rye, 260 quarters of barley, and 12,100 quarters of oats. The Consul states, that in years of abundance the quantity which could be exported would be three times as great as is stated in the table. There is an extraordinary (typographical) blunder in the statement of grain produced in the government of *Tamboff*, which is said in 1835 to have amounted to thirty-eight *million* quarters. The population of this province is about 1,600,000, so that each family raises nearly 120 quarters, or food sufficient for twenty-four families, or in the aggregate sufficient for the whole population of England for about two years and a half! Probably about 1,800,000 quarters of grain may be raised in the province, which would still leave some for export.

RIGA.—The largest quantities shipped from this port since 1783 have been as follows:—Wheat, 166,000 quarters in 1829; barley, 108,700 quarters in 1818; oats, 316,400 quarters in 1827; rye, 704,800 quarters in 1807. The supplies for Riga are principally from Courland, Lithuania, and White Russia. The soil of Livonia, of which Riga is the capital, is not well adapted for the growth of wheat, and rye is the chief production. When the foreign demand is very urgent, the distant provinces of Smolensk, Kaluga, and Orel send supplies to Riga.

LIEBAU.—The quantities in the table are those which could be exported in a favorable year. The Consul states, that “the greater part of our former supplies was shipped off to Holland and the interior of Russia.” The farmers bring their produce to Liebau as well as to Windau in sledges in the winter season only, consequently exports cannot be made until the opening of the navigation.

MEMEL.—We now come to the ports of Prussia. The

quantity stated in the table is the actual export of 1839, when the demand was general in many parts of Europe, and shipments were made even to Russia.

KÖNIGSBERG.—The returns include shipments from the port of Pillau, as well as from Königsberg. From 1825 to 1839, the exports of all kinds of grain averaged 221,476 quarters per annum, and if the trade were constantly open, the Consul is of opinion that from 250,000 to 260,000 quarters could be shipped, the proportion of each kind being as stated in the table.

DANZIG.—As the demand from Great Britain had been considerable during the three preceding years, the shipments for that period afford a fair average of the exports of Danzig if the trade were constantly open at a moderate duty; but from circumstances occasioned by the fluctuation of the duty in England, “there is a greater chance of less than of a larger quantity being shipped.” The quantities in the table are the average of the years 1837–8–9.

WARSAW.—We introduce Warsaw in this place, as the exports from Poland are shipped at Danzig. The statements of the Consul, given in the table, as to the quantity exported, are not accompanied by any remarks.

STETTIN.—The crops in this part of Prussia and in Silesia were very favorable in quantity and quality when the return was made, and under these circumstances the export would be as stated in the table, that is, under the prospect of a low duty.

ELSINORE.—Taking an annual average of the twenty years from 1820 to 1839 inclusive, the exports of Denmark and Sleswick-Holstein were—wheat, 106,736 quarters; rye, 135,851 quarters; barley, 302,752 quarters; and oats, 172,170 quarters. There is a permanent demand for barley from Norway, and this grain is particularly adapted to the soil and climate of Denmark and the Duchy. The

quantities in the table are such as might be expected to be exported to England in the event of the trade being constantly open at a moderate duty.

**HAMBURG.**—The return from this Consulate includes Lübeck, Bremen, Rostock, Wismar, Kiel, and Oldenburg. The quantities are taken on the average of years in which the largest export has taken place under the most favorable circumstances. In 1839, 496,000 quarters of grain of all kinds were shipped at Hamburg, being the largest quantity ever exported. From 1820 to 1839 about 240,000 quarters were exported annually. In 1821 only 85,000 quarters were exported, and in 1835 about 100,000 quarters.

**ROTTERDAM AND ANTWERP.**—The reasons why the Consuls at these places were unable to render their returns complete by filling up the parts left vacant in the table will be stated in noticing the fifth query.

**ODESSA.**—The annual exportation of wheat from Odessa, from 1830 to 1839 inclusive, averaged 581,340 quarters. From the Azoph the exportation averages about 450,000 quarters annually. Neither rye, barley, nor oats have ever been exported from these quarters. The Consul states, that “more than 100,000 quarters could not be diverted to a new source of demand without materially disturbing the market of Odessa, and more positively so if that quantity is to be subtracted from the supply of the finer qualities.” The extra supply from the Azoph, “where the demand from old customers is more special and peremptory on account of quality, would, on the same conditions, probably not exceed 50,000 quarters.” These are the quantities given in the summary.

**PALERMO.**—About 200,000 quarters could be exported when the harvest has proved abundant. Sicily, once the granary of Rome, ceased to be a corn-exporting country in 1826, in consequence of the heavy land tax, which amounts

to 25 per cent. on the rental. The wheat chiefly cultivated is of the hard kind, and could not be ground by English millstones. The soft wheat is liable to spoil if kept more than a twelvemonth in granary.

2. "Average prices per imperial quarter free on board;" and 3. "Probable freight per quarter to England." The following table gives a summary of the answers received to these two queries:—

*Average prices per quarter free on board; and probable freight per quarter to England.*

	Wheat.		Rye.		Barley.		Oats.		Freight per Quar.	
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
St. Petersburg	39	1	19	4	17	11	12	5	4	5 to 5 0
Riga .....	49	7	26	4	21	10	18	0	4	9
Liebau .....	43	7	25	9	18	7	11	4	4	6 — 5 0
Odessa .....	26	6	..	..	..	..	..	..	10	0
Warsaw .....	36	0	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Stockholm....	30	0 to 35 0	22	0 to 24 0	15	0 to 18 0	11	0 to 12 0	3	6 — 6 0
Danzig .....	40	0	20	0	18	0	12	0	3	6 — 4 0
Königsberg ..	40	0 — 45 0	18	0 — 20 0	14	0 — 18 0	10	0 — 14 0	4	0 — 6 0
Stettin.....	40	0	22	0	20	0	14	0	4	0 — 5 0
Memel .....	35	0	27	0	15	0	10	0 — 12 0	4	0 — 5 0
Elsinore .....	30	0 — 36 0	22	0 — 25 0	16	0 — 24 0	12	0 — 15 0	3	6 — 5 0
Hamburg .....	35	0 — 46 0	23	0 — 30 0	20	0 — 25 0	11	0 — 16 0	2	6 — 5 0
Rotterdam .....	55	0	..	..	..	..	15	0 — 22 0	2	0 — 2 6
Antwerp .....	56	5	32	1	28	9	22	1	2	0 — 2 6
Palermo .....	38	0	..	..	..	..	..	..	8	3
Average .....	40s. 6d.		24s. 0½d.		19s. 6½d.		14s. 1¾d.		4s. 9¾d.	

STOCKHOLM.—There is no duty on exportation.

ST. PETERSBURG.—Under ordinary circumstances the prices would be for hard wheat 39s. 1d. per quarter, and for soft 33s. 6d. The prices for other grain in average years would be those inserted in the table. The prices of different sorts of grain in 1835 in the government of Tamboff were—wheat, 13s. 6d. to 14s. 1d.; rye, 7s. 1d. to 7s. 7½d.; oats, 4s. 9½d. to 5s. 5½d. per quarter. The expenses to St. Petersburg were about 50 per cent. on wheat, and above 100 per cent. on rye and oats.

RIGA.—No statements are given beyond those which the table supplies, excepting that it is said freights would have



been higher had there been more corn for exportation to England this year.

LIEBAU.—The prices apply to corn and grain of first-rate qualities. There would besides be charges for lighterage, as vessels cannot take in their whole cargo in the harbors of Liebau and Windau. These amount to  $3\frac{1}{2}d.$  or  $4d.$  per quarter, and there is also to be added the cost of warehouse rent, mats for dunnage, fire insurance, sound dues, and marine insurance. The freight of oats to England is from  $3s. 9d.$  to  $4s.$  per quarter.

MEMEL.—The freights are chiefly regulated by timber freights.

KÖNIGSBERG.—The freights to the east coast of England are from  $4s.$  to  $5s.$  the quarter for wheat, and to the west coast from  $5s.$  to  $6s.$

DANZIG.—The treaty of Vienna stipulates that the duties levied by the governments of Austria, Russia, and Prussia conjointly, on the produce of the soil of the ancient Polish provinces, shall not exceed 10 per cent. on the prime cost, so that a heavy export duty could not be charged without the infraction of this treaty. The transit dues are included in the prices in the table.

WARSAW.—The remunerating price of wheat at Warsaw is  $24s.$  per quarter. The expenses of water carriage from thence to Danzig may be taken at  $12s.$  the quarter.

STETTIN.—The expenses of screening, loading, and commission are included in the prices free on board.

ELSLINORE.—The freight of wheat from Danish ports varies from  $3s.$  to  $3s. 6d.$  per quarter in summer, and from  $4s. 6d.$  to  $5s.$  in winter. To the western coasts of England it is usually from  $3d.$  to  $6d.$  higher. The exportation is duty free, but the expenses of insurance and commission are to be added to the prices in the table.

HAMBURG.—“It is not to be expected,” says the Consul,

“that prices would be lower than the average, unless an over-abundant production in Great Britain should cause a cessation in the demand from that quarter ; and on the other hand, they would be higher if the demand became greater.” He states that in extraordinary cases the freight to England might be from 8s. to 10s. per quarter ; but the usual freights are those given in the table : there is no export duty.

ROTTERDAM.—Add 10 per cent. primage to the freights : the rates of insurance vary from three-quarters to one and a half per cent., according to the season.

ANTWERP.—The freights in the table are to London and Hull ; to Liverpool the freight is 3s. to 3s. 6d. The freight for barley is 20 per cent., and for oats 30 per cent. less than for wheat.

ODESSA.—The average price of wheat of fine quality, free on board, was 26s. 6d. per quarter from 1830 to 1839. “At present (September, 1840) the price of good wheat on board is 32s. 6d., though without a visible demand from abroad.” Freights vary excessively, having fluctuated from 6s. 2d. to 21s. 6d. per quarter in the two preceding years. A good freight is supposed to be 10s. per quarter.

PALERMO.—In abundant harvests the price of wheat is 32s., and an average harvest 38s. per quarter.

The fourth query was for the purpose of ascertaining what “other” charges would be incurred besides freight ; if, for example, export duties were imposed. Where any such additional charges are made, the fact has been mentioned in the above notes.

5. “Whether, if there were a regular and steady demand in England for foreign corn, the quantity of corn produced in the said country or district would, without much difficulty and in a short space of time, be materially increased?”

STOCKHOLM.—Foreign capital would be requisite to ensure an increased production.

ST. PETERSBURG.—“There are extensive tracts of land in the provinces that now supply St. Petersburg, which would, no doubt, be brought into cultivation, were a steady and certain market for corn opened at this place.”

RIGA.—Rye is cultivated in preference to wheat, as it is the bread-corn of the country, is used in the distilleries, and shipped extensively to Holland. The principal corn districts are too remote from the ports to enable the farmers to get their crops to market sufficiently early for exportation in the same year, and therefore they cannot profit so decidedly by the occurrence of a bad harvest in England as those in the neighborhood of some other of the Baltic ports. The rapid increase of manufactures has withdrawn many hands from the cultivation of the soil in this part of Russia. The cultivation of beet-root for the sugar refineries, and the constant demand for flax, which always obtains remunerating prices in the Riga market, also tend to counteract any great increase in the production of corn.

LIEBAU.—The query is answered in the negative.

MEMEL.—“In four or five years about a fourth more grain would be cultivated. This depends however entirely upon how high the fixed duty is. Ten shillings per quarter for wheat would be worse for the landholders here than the present system: for instance—

Prime cost . . . . .	8.	35 per quarter.
Freight, insurance, landing charges, &c. 10	10	“
Duty . . . . .	10	“
	<hr/>	
Total . . . . .	55	
	<hr/>	

whereby many years would come wherein the merchants here could not export at all.”

KÖNIGSBERG.—The farmers find it more profitable to devote their attention to the breeding of sheep, horses, and cattle, which, particularly wool, answer better than growing corn.

DANZIG.—The chief quantity of grain shipped here is the produce of Poland ; but the districts of Prussia adjoining Danzig are in such a state of advanced cultivation, that “a larger supply for shipment could not be expected (at least not to any extent) than the last three years have supplied.”

WARSAW.—“The quantity of wheat grown in Poland has considerably increased in the last six years, and the production might no doubt be further gradually increased if there were a steady demand for foreign corn in England ; but the deficiency of manure, the scarcity of hands, and the want of skill in the cultivation of the land, would operate against any large immediate increase.” The Consul at *Stettin* reports that “the production of all kinds of grain has these two or three years been extended to a considerable degree ; it is therefore not expected the landowners can much augment the same, the cultivating of additional soil not being in their system of agriculture, particularly as the production of oil-seed, of potatoes for spirit, and pasture and food for sheep and cattle, has been too advantageous for them to curtail the same to any considerable degree.”

ELLSINORE.—In case of a regular and steady demand in England for foreign corn, the quantity produced in Denmark and Sleswick-Holstein “would, without difficulty, and in a short space of time, be materially increased, as has already been the case of late years, in consequence of the improvements made in husbandry, and of large tracts of waste lands having been brought under cultivation by an increasing population, chiefly agricultural.” The quantities likely to be produced under this encouragement are stated in the table under the first query.

HAMBURG.—The answer to the query respecting the likelihood of an increased quantity of grain being produced is “Probably not.” Mr. Consul-General Canning gives the following reasons for this opinion :—“because as much land

is already appropriated in this district to the growth of corn as the system of husbandry established in these duchies will admit of. Wool, butter, and potatoes for distillation having for many years been profitable produce to the farmer, he will not easily be induced to give up the cultivation of the latter, or to sell off his sheep and cattle, which, moreover, afford manure positively necessary for the cultivation of grain. But although the quantity of grain may not be increased in a short space of time, the kind of corn may be changed, and more wheat, but less of other grain, under such a change of circumstances, may be grown than at present. Still, however, this will occur only to a limited extent, and at times when high prices in other countries may encourage the export of wheat, for the habits of the people in this district causing a demand for rye for home use, the demand for it in other countries, and the nature of the soil being generally fitter for the cultivation of rye, will always have a tendency to prevent any great extension of the growth of wheat in these countries."

ROTTERDAM.—Large quantities of the produce of northern Europe and the countries on the Rhine are warehoused in Holland and re-exported to other parts. Confining the question to Holland, the Consul states that more wheat is grown in that country than is required for its consumption, but it "is not of a quality adapted to the English market." The effect of opening the corn trade in England would not "materially" increase the production of wheat in Holland. Rye grown in Holland is seldom or never exported; and the barley is "quite unsuitable" to the English market. Dutch oats are much esteemed in England, but the quantity grown (about 800,000 quarters) is not at present more than adequate to the home demand. Still, if the demand from England were regular and constant at remunerating prices, "it may safely be assumed that an increased cultivation (of oats)

would speedily ensue." It is added that "beans and peas are both likely to be grown in greater quantity," but to what extent it is impossible to state.

ANTWERP.—Belgium produces neither corn nor grain for export ; and the Consul states that it is not probable, "under any circumstances," that the production could be influenced by the demand for England. Writing in August, 1841, he says :—"The exportation of wheat and rye is at present prohibited, and with an augmented population, the quantity of land cultivated for flax, beet-root, and chicory, which is increasing throughout Brabant, Limburg, and Liege, has so diminished the growth of corn, that there is a deficiency of produce."

ODESSA.—The quantity which could be spared for England from the districts adjacent to Odessa and the countries bordering the sea of Azoph is at present not more than 150,000 quarters of wheat, as already stated. In reply to the present query, the Consul states that "there would be no material increase, and certainly not in a short space of time." The grounds for this opinion are very succinctly detailed, and several of them apply to a large portion of northern, central, and eastern Europe, as well as the countries bordering on the Black Sea. They are as follows :—"1. Because in Podolia and Kiev, whence Odessa derives its principal supplies, the greatest quantity possible of grain is at all times produced without regard to price and demand, in consequence of capital being vested in slave-labor, which is not otherwise to be employed. 2. Because the plains, called steppes, adjacent to the Black Sea and Azoph, are thinly peopled, so that in years when crops are abundant they remain neglected on the ground for want of reapers. 3. Because on these steppes crops are exceedingly precarious, by reason of drought, the common calamity of this climate ; of the high winds, which carry off the seed from the dusty soil ; of the

early thaws and subsequent frosts without snow. 4. Because tillage is defective, and improvement difficult under the present circumstances of the country. 5. Because distances are great and communications unaided by art, there being no roads, and the rivers being unnavigable. 6. Because the landlords are impoverished, and most of them indebted to the crown, and the working classes are degraded by their condition of slavery. 7. Because no progressive improvements are to be expected in Russia until great organic changes are brought about, or so long as the real interests are sacrificed to an anti-commercial policy. Very high prices may indeed cause at times a greater exportation, not by increase of production, but by extending the circle of supply."

PALERMO.—If the farmer could continually obtain 35s. per quarter free on board, the production of hard wheat could be increased in three or four years.

## APPENDIX.

## THE SLIDING SCALE.

*The following Tables, derived from the "Tribune," are made up for the use of merchants engaged in shipping wheat and flour from the United States and Canada to England, and as a reference for Western merchants, millers, and farmers:—*  
*The Table is calculated as follows:—Eight bushels to the quarter, and five bushels to the barrel, which is sufficiently near for the purposes intended.*

ON WHEAT AND FLOUR IMPORTED INTO ENGLAND FROM THE UNITED STATES,									
Whenever Wheat per quarter (8 bushels) is worth					Whenever Flour per barrel is worth				
\$ s.	c.	\$	s.	c.	\$ s.	c.	\$	s.	c.
The duty is					The duty is				
\$ c.	\$ s.	\$ c.	\$ s.	\$ c.	\$ d.	\$ c.	\$ d.	\$ c.	\$ d.
51 or 12 24	under 51	or 12 24	20 or 4 80	31	10½ or 7 65	12 or 7 65	12 6 or 3 00	10½ or 7 80	11 10½ or 2 85
52 or 12 48	" 52	or 12 48	19 or 4 56	32	6 or 7 80	and " 34 4½ or 8 25	11 3 or 2 70	11 3 or 2 70	11 3 or 2 70
55 or 13 20	" 55	or 13 20	18 or 4 32	33	4½ or 8 25	and " 35 7½ or 8 40	10 7½ or 2 55	10 7½ or 2 55	10 7½ or 2 55
56 or 13 44	" 56	or 13 44	17 or 3 08	34	4½ or 8 40	and " 36 3 or 8 55	10 4½ or 2 40	10 4½ or 2 40	10 4½ or 2 40
57 or 13 68	" 57	or 13 68	16 or 3 84	35	7½ or 8 55	and " 36 10½ or 8 70	9 4½ or 2 25	9 4½ or 2 25	9 4½ or 2 25
58 or 13 92	" 58	or 13 92	15 or 3 60	36	3 or 8 70	and " 67 6 or 9 00	8 1½ or 1 95	8 1½ or 1 95	8 1½ or 1 95
59 or 14 16	" 59	or 14 16	14 or 3 36	37	10½ or 8 85	and " 38 1½ or 9 15	7 6 or 1 80	7 6 or 1 80	7 6 or 1 80
60 or 14 40	" 60	or 14 40	13 or 2 12	38	6 or 9 00	and " 38 9 or 9 30	6 10½ or 1 65	6 10½ or 1 65	6 10½ or 1 65
61 or 14 64	" 61	or 14 64	12 or 2 88	39	1½ or 9 15	and " 39 4 or 9 45	6 3 or 1 50	6 3 or 1 50	6 3 or 1 50
62 or 14 88	" 62	or 14 88	11 or 2 64	40	9 or 9 30	and " 40 7½ or 9 60	5 7½ or 1 35	5 7½ or 1 35	5 7½ or 1 35
63 or 15 12	" 63	or 15 12	10 or 2 40	41	4½ or 9 45	and " 41 3 or 9 75	5 4½ or 1 20	5 4½ or 1 20	5 4½ or 1 20
64 or 15 36	" 64	or 15 36	9 or 1 16	42	4 or 9 60	and " 43 1½ or 10 35	4 4½ or 1 05	4 4½ or 1 05	4 4½ or 1 05
65 or 15 60	" 65	or 15 60	8 or 1 92	43	7½ or 9 75	and " 43 9 or 10 50	3 9 or 90	3 9 or 90	3 9 or 90
66 or 15 84	" 66	or 15 84	7 or 1 68	44	3 or 9 90	and " 44 4½ or 10 65	2 6 or 60	2 6 or 60	2 6 or 60
67 or 16 08	" 67	or 16 08	6 or 1 44	45	1½ or 10 35	and " 45 7½ or 10 95	1 10½ or 45	1 10½ or 45	1 10½ or 45
68 or 16 32	" 68	or 16 32	5 or 1 20	46	4½ or 10 65	and " 46 7½ or 10 95	1 3 or 30	1 3 or 30	1 3 or 30
69 or 16 56	" 69	or 16 56	4 or 92	47	4½ or 10 80	and " 47 7½ or 10 95	1 7½ or 15	1 7½ or 15	1 7½ or 15
70 or 16 80	" 70	or 16 80	3 or 72	48	7½ or 10 95	and over			
71 or 17 04	" 71	or 17 04	2 or 48	49					
72 or 17 28	" 72	or 17 28	1 or 24	50					
73 or 17 52	" 73	or 17 52	1 or 24	51					
74 or 18 16	" 74	or 18 16	1 or 24	52					
75 or 18 40	" 75	or 18 40	1 or 24	53					
76 or 18 64	" 76	or 18 64	1 or 24	54					
77 or 18 88	" 77	or 18 88	1 or 24	55					
78 or 19 12	" 78	or 19 12	1 or 24	56					
79 or 19 36	" 79	or 19 36	1 or 24	57					
80 or 19 60	" 80	or 19 60	1 or 24	58					
81 or 19 84	" 81	or 19 84	1 or 24	59					
82 or 20 08	" 82	or 20 08	1 or 24	60					
83 or 20 32	" 83	or 20 32	1 or 24	61					
84 or 20 56	" 84	or 20 56	1 or 24	62					
85 or 21 20	" 85	or 21 20	1 or 24	63					
86 or 21 44	" 86	or 21 44	1 or 24	64					
87 or 21 68	" 87	or 21 68	1 or 24	65					
88 or 21 92	" 88	or 21 92	1 or 24	66					
89 or 22 16	" 89	or 22 16	1 or 24	67					
90 or 22 40	" 90	or 22 40	1 or 24	68					
91 or 22 64	" 91	or 22 64	1 or 24	69					
92 or 22 88	" 92	or 22 88	1 or 24	70					
93 or 23 12	" 93	or 23 12	1 or 24	71					
94 or 23 36	" 94	or 23 36	1 or 24	72					
95 or 23 60	" 95	or 23 60	1 or 24	73					
96 or 23 84	" 96	or 23 84	1 or 24	74					
97 or 24 08	" 97	or 24 08	1 or 24	75					
98 or 24 32	" 98	or 24 32	1 or 24	76					
99 or 24 56	" 99	or 24 56	1 or 24	77					
100 or 25 20	" 100	or 25 20	1 or 24	78					



ON WHEAT AND FLOUR IMPORTED IN ENGLAND FROM CANADA											
Whenever wheat per quarter is worth						Whenever flour per barrel is worth					
			The duty is						The duty is		
s.	\$	c.	s.	\$	c.	s.	d.	\$	c.	s.	d.
55 or 13 20	and under	55 or 13 20	5 or 1 20	96	34 4½	or 8 25	35	or 8 40	2 6	or 60	
56 or 13 44	and under	56 or 13 44	4 or 96	72	35	or 8 41	35 7½	or 8 55	1 10½	or 45	
57 or 13 68	and under	57 or 13 68	3 or 72	48	35 7½	or 8 55	36 3	or 8 70	1 3	or 30	
58 or 13 92	and over	58 or 13 92	2 or 48	24	36 3	or 8 70	and over		7½	or 15	

In these tables the pound sterling is computed at \$4 80, which is the legal value.

CORN LAWS OF GREAT BRITAIN.				BARLEY.			
Wheat—If imported from any foreign country; Whenever the average price of wheat, made up and published in a man- ner required by law, shall be for every quar- ter :—				Under	per quar.		
Under	s.	per quar.	£ s.	s.		s.	
51 the duty shall be			1 00	26 the duty shall be		11	
51 and under	52s.		19	26 and under	27s.	19	
52 “	55s.		18	27 “	30s.	9	
55 “	56s.		17	30 “	31s.	8	
56 “	57s.		16	31 “	32s.	7	
57 “	58s.		15	32 “	33s.	6	
58 “	59s.		14	33 “	34s.	5	
59 “	60s.		13	34 “	35s.	4	
60 “	61s.		12	35 “	36s.	3	
61 “	62s.		11	36 “	37s.	2	
62 “	63s.		10	37 and upwards		1	
63 “	64s.		9	The duty on MAIZE, or INDIAN CORN, BUCKWHEAT and BEAR or BIGG, shall be for every quarter, a duty equal to the duty payable on a quarter of Barley.			
64 “	65s.		8	WHEAT.			
65 “	66s.		7	If imported from Canada or other British posses- sions :—			
66 “	69s.		6	Under	per quar.		
69 “	70s.		5	s.		s.	
70 “	71s.		4	55 the duty shall be		5	
71 “	72s.		3	55 and under	56s.	4	
72 “	73s.		2	56 and under	57s.	3	
73 and upward			1	57 “	58s.	2	
				58 and upwards		1	

UCSB LIBRARY

X-20157

U.S. SOUTHERN REGIONAL BOARD



A

000 541 169

9

